

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Edification of the Body”

Introduction

When writing to the church in Corinth, Paul stated, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Co. 12:1, 8-10). Why did the Lord place spiritual gifts in the church? The apostle Paul did not want the saints to misunderstand the function and purpose of these gifts. By explaining God’s will concerning spiritual gifts, the saints would know how the gifts should operate in the church, and at the same time be able to discern the spirit of error. In today’s lesson, we will examine God’s purpose in the operation of spiritual gifts.

Key Verse

“Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church” (1 Co. 14:12).

Lesson Summary

Paul taught the principle of the edification of the body as an objective/goal for the church (Ep. 4:12). Jesus Christ wants his body, his church, to be edified, built up, and established in the faith (Ep. 4:13). Since the church is not one member but many members in one body, each individual member should seek to benefit the whole body (1 Co. 12:14, 20). In the same way that each part of the physical body serves to support the needs of the whole man, each individual member of the church should serve to build up the corporate whole of the church. For example, we should build each other up through cultivating love and peace among ourselves (Ro. 14:19; 12:10; He. 10:24), by comforting and supporting each other (1 Th. 5:11, 14), and by speaking gracious words of encouragement to one another (Ep. 4:29; He. 10:25). However, an unhealthy body is one in which a particular member becomes sick, no longer serving to strengthen the body, but rather draining life from it. The church at Corinth was spiritually immature and prone to fleshly attitudes and behaviors (1 Co. 3:1-3). Paul wrote to the church to correct them on many divisive issues, spiritual gifts being one of them. He wrote to instruct them and to clarify the work of the Spirit and spiritual gifts. God has given a variety of spiritual gifts, but the same Holy Ghost operates all of them (1 Co. 12:1, 4-6, 11) – that is, there are many gifts but one mind of the Spirit. Paul taught edification as a basic guiding principle in the operation of spiritual gifts in the church. As we “covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Co. 12:31), we should always seek to edify the church above our own will and desires (1 Co. 14:3-5, 12, 26). The gifts of the Spirit manifest through individual members, not only for their own edification, but even more so for the profit of the whole church (1 Co. 12:7; 14:5). The operation of the gifts should benefit all of the members, rather than satisfying the will of one or two. Moreover, the Lord distributes spiritual gifts among the members of the church in such a way as to unite the body of Christ (1 Co. 12:24-26). “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him” (v. 18) – and he has set them in the body with gifts. However, the spiritual gifts are not for the individual’s use; for such use would produce division and disrupt the harmony and unity of the church. But the Spirit operates the gifts through individual believers to produce mutual care and support among all (v. 25). In this way, the whole church suffers and rejoices together, sharing a common experience in the Spirit (v. 26).

Scripture Study

The principle of edification – Ep. 4:12-13, 29; 1 Co. 12:14, 20; Ro. 12:10; 14:19; He. 10:24-25; 1 Th. 5:11, 14

Edification through spiritual gifts – 1 Co. 3:1-3; 12:1, 4-7, 11, 31; 14:3-5, 12, 26

The unity of the body – 1 Co. 12:18, 24-26

Conclusion

The spiritual gifts are given for the good of the whole body. They should operate within the church to build up and unite, not tear down and divide. In 1 Co. 13:1-13, Paul went on to explain that the key to edification in the operation of spiritual gifts is love. When the operation of spiritual gifts is motivated by love, the gifts will function to edify the body of Christ.

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Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Wisdom and Knowledge”

Introduction

Throughout the Scriptures, God gave certain individuals special gifts of wisdom and knowledge to help them in their service to him. Bezaleel was filled with the Spirit “in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship” for the building of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:30-35). The prophet Daniel was a man full of godly wisdom, knowledge, and understanding who became a chief ruler in Babylon (Da. 5:5-14), and of course, the wisdom and knowledge of King Solomon is well known (1 Ki. 3:5-12). Today, God has given us spiritual gifts of both wisdom and knowledge in order to help us serve Christ and build up his church (1 Co. 12:8).

Key Verse

“For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Pr. 2:6).

Lesson Summary

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit” (1 Co. 12:8). The apostle Paul appropriately listed wisdom and knowledge at the beginning of the spiritual gifts, not because they are more important than the others but likely because they are the basis of understanding among the spiritual gifts – a wise place to begin. Wisdom and knowledge are similar, and often operate in an interrelated way (Ep. 1:17; Co. 1:9), yet they are distinct and separate attributes. So what are the differences between wisdom and knowledge? “Wisdom” (*sophia*) indicates a depth or quality of “understanding” (1 Co. 2:7, 10, 13), while “knowledge” (*gnosis*) indicates an increase or a quantity of “insight” (Co. 1:10). Wisdom is the foundation of all spiritual knowledge and understanding. A wise man seeks the knowledge of God, but a fool refuses his knowledge and instruction (Pr. 1:5, 7, 22; 15:14). For the sake of distinction, wisdom has the capacity to grow in knowledge, but knowledge without wisdom may prove unskillful, even destructive. For example, knowledge means comprehending the right answer; wisdom means the ability to understand and communicate (explain) the answer. Knowledge understands what to say; but wisdom knows when and how to say it. Thus, knowledge should **build** upon wisdom (Pr. 4:7). Solomon, who God endowed with wisdom, explained this **building** principle in Proverbs 24:3-5. Literally speaking, the wisdom (the “know how”) to construct a building is necessary in order to build a house; then after it is built, further knowledge is necessary to finish and beautify the rooms throughout it (vv. 3-4). Knowledge builds upon wisdom. Likewise, wisdom is comparable to being strong; whereas knowledge is like becoming stronger and stronger (v. 5). Again, knowledge builds upon wisdom. Clearly, wisdom and knowledge are interrelated and should complement one another. We need both gifts operating within the church. Paul’s unique designation of these special gifts, referring to them in terms of “the word” of wisdom and knowledge, demonstrates that God’s Spirit supplies both wisdom and knowledge through individual members of the body for the edification of the whole church. “The word” indicates something spoken. In these gifts, the Holy Spirit enables a believer to speak and communicate an understanding needed within the body of Christ. Therefore, these gifts clearly are not operated by the Spirit for the individual’s benefit alone, since both gifts are manifested as “the word,” and words are spoken in order to be heard. The Holy Ghost then moves through one member to *speak* wisdom or to *speak* knowledge for the benefit of the other members. Furthermore, “the word” also implies the written Word of God, thus, the Spirit enables an individual believer to understand wisdom and knowledge consistent with the Holy Scriptures, and as a result, to speak by the gift. Thus, these gifts of the Spirit will never contradict the principles of sound teaching based on the Holy Scriptures, for the Spirit always agrees with the Word of God.

Scripture Study

Examples of wisdom and knowledge – Ex. 35:30-35; Da. 5:5-14; 1 Ki. 3:5-12

Comparing wisdom and knowledge – Ep. 1:17; Co. 1:9-10; 1 Co. 12:8; 2:7, 10, 13; Pr. 1:5, 7, 22; 15:14; 4:7; 24:3-5

Conclusion

The church needs wisdom and knowledge to fulfill its mission, but this means individual members of the body must be yielded to God as instruments of the Spirit (Ro. 6:13). God desires to speak through us words of wisdom and knowledge to give help and guidance to our ministries; but we must be spiritually prepared to be used of the Spirit (2 Ti. 2:21).

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Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Faith”

Introduction

How important is faith to every believer? How important is faith in the life of the church? In Hebrews 11:6, faith is essential to our acceptance with God, for we cannot please him unless we believe in him (Jn. 3:16). Truly, we cannot serve the Lord and follow him in discipleship without genuine faith and trust in Jesus Christ. In today's lesson, we will consider the importance of faith itself and the significance of the spiritual gift of faith.

Key Verse

"But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (He. 11:6).

Lesson Summary

Because faith in Jesus Christ is required for salvation, faith is a gift of God's grace. That is, every man has the capacity to believe the gospel and follow faithfully in Christ's service. When Paul wrote to the saints in Rome, explaining about gifts of grace functioning in the body of Christ, he explained that God has distributed to every believer "the measure of faith" or "a measure of faith." "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man *the measure of faith*" (Ro. 12:3). Paul was explaining that the gifts of God are just that, gifts given to us from the Lord. We are not so special in and of ourselves. Instead, God has blessed and equipped us by his grace with special abilities in order to serve him by faith. So every member of the body has the faith to serve the Lord and benefit the whole church in some unique way, because "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Ro. 12:3-6). Thus, none are excluded in God's plan, but every member of the body has the faith it takes to please God. "The measure of faith" enables an individual to believe in God, embrace his Word, trust in Jesus Christ, obey his commandments, and to serve the Lord faithfully. In other words, when God calls a person to follow Jesus Christ and serve him, he also supplies him with the necessary faith to please the Lord in all things. "The measure of faith" itself is therefore a gift of God's grace. How does faith impact the church, its mission and ministry? Faith in Jesus Christ is powerful – it can move mountains (Mt. 21:17-22). Though Jesus referred to a literal mountain when teaching his disciples about faith, he actually meant that any major obstacle in our lives could be moved through faith. By faith, nothing is impossible with God (17:20); therefore, Jesus compelled us to believe in him, abide in him, and ask in his name (Jn. 14:1; 15:7; 16:23-24), for great and mighty works are ours for the asking (Jn. 14:12-14). To help the church reach its fullest potential, God has given the spiritual gift of faith as a special, divine enablement to believe in God's Word and to receive freely from the Lord (1 Co. 12:9). Reasonably, this gift could be exercised by the Spirit through an individual in order to receive a blessing from the Lord personally or to administer a blessing upon another member of the body. Either way, the gift serves to edify and build up the body of Christ, fulfilling the joy of the Lord in the church. Genuine faith is spiritually productive – it produces good works through the believer that validates his faith (Ja. 2:17-26). Therefore, anytime this spiritual gift operates through a member of the body, something profitable is taking place in the life of the church: prayers are being answered; souls are turning to Christ; saints are being encouraged; and many other blessings are being received.

Scripture Study

The measure of faith – He. 11:6; Jn. 3:16; Ro. 12:3-6

The power of faith – Mt. 17:20; 21:17-22; Jn. 14:1, 12-14; 15:7; 16:23-24

The spiritual gift of faith – 1 Co. 12:9; Ja. 2:17-26

Conclusion

Indeed, faith itself is a gift of God, and faith in God is powerful. Clearly, when the spiritual gift of faith is operating through individual members of the body, the church is strengthened because faith in Christ produces good works among us. When we see God working in the church by the gift, the faith of the whole church is emboldened to continue asking and believing for even greater works. In this way, the spiritual gift of faith operating in the church helps the body of Christ to grow in faith and proves essential in fulfilling the mission of the church.

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Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Healings and Miracles”

Introduction

The world is filled with suffering, needy people. In Matthew 9:35, Jesus had been travelling village to village, teaching, preaching, and healing the sick. At one point, Jesus looked on the multitude and was overwhelmed by what he witnessed. The people were like sheep without a shepherd. There were so many needy people everywhere that one man simply could not minister to them all (vv. 36-38). In today's lesson, we will see that the Spirit has placed the gifts of healing and the working of miracles in the body of Christ in order to help us minister to those in need and to magnify the name of Jesus.

Key Verse

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ep. 3:20).

Lesson Summary

The Lord is our healer (Ps. 103:1-3). A major part of Jesus' earthly ministry was healing the sick and diseased (Mt. 8:13-17). He provided healing for all through his atoning work – through his sacrifice when he shed his blood and died on the cross. Moreover, Jesus suffered and died for the healing of the whole man: mind, soul, spirit, and body. By his stripes we are (were) healed (Is. 53:4-5; 1 Pe. 2:24). Healing is therefore possible for everyone who believes in Christ (Mk. 9:23). While healing is provided through Christ, it is accomplished by the power of the Spirit. Jesus himself healed the sick by the power of the Holy Spirit, and he promised to baptize every believer with that same Spirit and power (Jn. 1:32-34; Lu. 4:18; Ac. 1:5, 8; 2:39). In fact, the Holy Spirit has placed "gifts" of healing in the body of Christ (1 Co. 12:9). When Paul referred to healing, he wrote in terms of "gifts" rather than "gift." Since the Spirit demonstrates many healing gifts through individual members of the body as he wills (vv. 7, 11), we can conclude that God can and does heal all types of sicknesses, diseases, and oppressions (addictions, mental illnesses, cancers, emotional scars, to name a few) by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ. We should consider, however, that healings in this present world are not entire or absolute. Though someone is completely healed of an illness (Ac. 3:16), his body remains imperfect. For example, the Lord may heal my broken bones, so that I walk again, yet I still suffer with arthritis in my body. Also, the person through whom the gifts of healing flow should not be confused with the person being healed. In other words, the Spirit could use me to bring healing to another person, while I continue to suffer through my own infirmity (see the apostle Paul's suffering in 2 Co. 12:7-9). Such distinctions only serve to remind us that the gifts of healing are not ours to exercise as we please, but the gifts are operated by the Spirit through members of the body as it pleases God (1 Co. 12:11, 18). Likewise, the Spirit also gives the working of miracles for the edification of the whole church and for the glory of Jesus Christ (1 Co. 12:10). Miracles are indeed supernatural works of God's Spirit and power. Although healings and miracles are in many ways similar, for many healings are nothing short of miraculous signs (Jn. 4:46-54), perhaps the primary distinguishing mark of a miracle is that it defies human explanation, leaving us in awe and wonder of God's mighty power and glory (Lu. 8:25; 9:42-43; Jn. 2:23; 6:14; 7:31). Consider, Jesus turned water into wine (Jn. 2:1-11), multiplied the loaves and fishes (Lu. 9:12-17), calmed the raging storm (Mt. 8:24-27), walked on water (Mk. 6:47-51), cast out devils (Lu. 8:26-37), and even raised the dead to life again (Jn. 11:32-45). Through the spiritual gift of the working of miracles, Jesus can still do mighty wonders by his Spirit in the church today. Since the gift of miracles is the work of the Spirit and not of man, this gift should never exalt an individual member of the body but rather bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ (Ac. 8:9-24).

Scripture Study

Gifts of healing – Ps. 103:1-3; Mt. 8:13-17; Is. 53:4-5; 1 Pe. 2:24; Mk.9:23; Jn. 1:32-34; Lu. 4:18; Ac. 1:5, 8; 2:39; 1 Co. 12:7, 9, 11, 18; Ac. 3:16; 2 Co. 12:7-9

Working of miracles --1 Co. 12:10; Jn. 4:46-54; Lu. 8:25; 9:42-43; Jn. 2:23; 6:14; 7:31; Ac. 8:9-24

Conclusion

By the gifts of healing and the working of miracles, God's Spirit is powerful and active in and through the church enabling us to fulfill Christ's mission in the world. Certainly, the needs of mankind are much greater than Zion Assembly can humanly fill, but God's Spirit is able to do above and beyond all we can possibly imagine (Ep. 3:20).

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"Spiritual Gifts II"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

“Prophecy and Discernment”

Introduction

In 1 Corinthians 12:10, Paul identified the gift of prophecy and the gift of discerning of spirits. In today's lesson, a general explanation of these two gifts will be provided, and then the relationship of these gifts to each other will be explained. As we will see, these gifts are essential to the healthy functioning and spiritual balance of the church.

Key Verse

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith” (Ro. 12:6).

Lesson Summary

First, what is the gift of prophecy? Down through the ages, God has spoken by his Spirit through prophets revealing his will for mankind (He. 1:1-2; 2 Pe. 1:21). Although the *office* of prophet is no longer needed since the foundation of the church has been laid (Ep. 2:20; 1 Co. 3:10), God nevertheless speaks through “prophets” today. We typically call them “preachers.” Moreover, though God has finished speaking in as far as the Holy Scriptures are complete, he continues to speak through individuals by his Spirit to the church today through the gift of prophecy (Ro. 12:6). The Holy Ghost anoints individual believers to speak God's word with power and authority (1 Co. 2:4-5; 1 Th. 1:5). In the gift of prophecy, believers declare the Word and will of God with the unction of the Holy Ghost (Ac. 2:18; Re. 19:10; Ac. 21:10-11). On the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke by the gift of prophecy when he “lifted up his voice” and preached the baptism with the Holy Ghost to the multitude: declaring their experience to be the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Ac. 2:12-18). The gift of prophecy continues to work in this same manner – the Spirit clarifying and declaring the mind of God in the church. Second, what is the gift of discernment? To discern means to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error. Discernment therefore requires righteous and spiritual judgment in the church (1 Co. 2:15; 5:12). The church has the responsibility of both “**proving** what is acceptable unto the Lord” (Ep. 5:10) and **reproving** “the unfruitful works of darkness” (v. 11). We must be able to prove the right and reprove the wrong. The gift of discerning of spirits is the divine ability to distinguish the nature of spirits, whether they are of God or not (1 Jn. 4:1). Of course, the one exercising this gift must himself know the truth and word of God, for by knowing the Spirit of Truth, one recognizes spirits of error. Reasonably then, the gift of discernment has as much to do with discerning truth as discerning error (1 Jn. 2:21; 4:5-6). Third, what is the relationship between the gifts of prophecy and discernment? The gift of prophecy is the divine enablement to speak the words of God by the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It functions to provide divine understanding and guidance for the ministry and mission of the church. God speaks by this gift of the Spirit through individual members to direct the course of the church. The potential danger regarding the gift of prophecy is when someone speaks in error and leads the church contrary to God's will. The apostle Peter decisively warned against false teachers who follow after greed and the lust of the flesh, being “presumptuous” and “self-willed” (2 Pe. 2:1, 3, 10). Likewise, the apostle John implored the faithful to “try” (test, prove) the spirits “because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1). Hence, the gift of discerning of spirits is given to keep the church from such error. On this note, we should keep in mind that the Spirit of prophecy is also the Spirit of discernment. Therefore, the church should not be fearful of the gift of prophecy because the same Spirit has also given to the church the gift of discernment (1 Co. 12:4). These two spiritual gifts provide the necessary check and balance within the church. The church should be neither spiritually gullible nor suspicious. Instead, we should give the Spirit complete liberty to speak in the church (1 Th. 5:19-20), because we are enabled to discern fully the true Spirit of the Lord (v. 21).

Scripture Study

The gift of prophecy – He. 1:1-2; 2 Pe. 1:21; Ro. 12:6; 1 Co. 2:4-5; 1 Th. 1:5; Ac. 2:12-18; Re. 19:10; Ac. 21:10-11

The gift of discernment – 1 Co. 2:15; 5:12; Ep. 5:10-11; 1 Jn. 2:21; 4:1, 5-6

Balance in the church – 2 Pe. 2:1, 3, 10; 1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Co. 12:4; 1 Th. 5:19-21

Conclusion

Clearly, the gifts of prophecy and discernment should operate in the church for the edification of the whole body. When the word of the Lord goes forth with the inspiration and power of the Spirit by the gift of prophecy, and the saints exercise the gift of discernment in their spiritual experience, the church can then hear from God freely with the confidence and assurance of knowing the truth.