

Sunday Sidebar: March 17, 2019

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he writes in 12.4-11: ***Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.***

Here, Paul lists the gifts of the Spirit as wisdom, knowledge, increased faith, the ability to heal, ability to do miracles, prophecy, the discernment of spirits, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Elsewhere he adds to the list the gifts of apostle, teacher, pastor, evangelist, administrative leadership, and gifts of helping.

All of these gifts are given to individuals by the Holy Spirit for the same purpose: to build up the body of Christ, the Church. The gifts are not given for private purposes, or for ego boosts. They are given for the common good of the body of Christ, that all may be taught, trained, and gifted for the work of ministry and service in the world, ***until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ*** (Ephesians 4.13).

It has been the Church's understanding for almost two thousand years, that the Holy Spirit offers one or more of these gifts to every individual who is called to leadership and service in His Church. There are a number of good tools and inventories that can help people figure out their particular gift so that they can focus on sharpening that gift to use it for ministry. Do you know your spiritual gift?

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit

In Galatians 5, Paul tells his friends of the importance of being led by the Holy Spirit, rather than being led by the desires of the flesh (as they were before receiving Christ). And as we learn to follow the Spirit and be guided by it, there are wonderful virtues that grow in us, like fruit. In fact, Paul calls these things the "fruit of the Spirit." ***...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*** (Galatians 5.22-23).

These fruits of the Spirit are different from the *gifts* of the Spirit. All of these fruits are given to **every** believer. As we continue to grow in Christ, pattern our lives after Christ, and bring more and more areas of our lives under Christ's control, these fruits of the Spirit grow in us, producing changes in our temperament and personality that are obvious and visible to others. In other words, people notice as we are transformed! How is your fruit growing these days? Has anyone noticed the changes you're undergoing?