

## Parson to Person

### 1 Corinthians 12 – Part 5

#### (Offices and Functions in the Body of Christ)

*“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12:27–31).*

#### **Smorgasbord Scripture Application**

As the result of denominational and tradition-based perspectives, some Bible students discount selected Church Age teaching as past tense in application. Those who do this are discounting the very word of God. This passage is one such case in study.

In this final section of 1 Corinthians 12, the Corinthians were told that there are important roles, offices, and gifts “not to be rejected” (see vss. 14–22). There are persons whom God has called to Himself—for salvific purposes, but has also called them to functional ministry—as part of the Church in the Church Age. The list includes “...*apostles, ...prophets, ...teachers, ...miracles, ...gifts of healings, helps, administrations, [and] varieties of tongues.*”

Rarely will someone suggest that “teachers,” “helpers,” and “administrators” are no longer part of the Church, but you will hear people say that there are no longer “apostles,” “prophets” and/or any such gift involving “varieties of tongues.” The forensic dissection of the list should trouble any serious Bible student.

As the result of our serious study of Scripture, and as the result of our intentional acceptance of the whole of the word of God, we must not follow the lead of those who practice such an erroneous hermeneutical error. We must interpret the Bible using the Bible—not our biases, denominational leanings, or personal experiences. We are Bible people who must trust the Bible as the last and final authority on all that pertains to life and godliness.

This said, some definitions and applicational attributes should be identified regarding the gifts and callings named in this section. These are not the only gifts, as earlier lists named other gifts (see vs. 8–10). Moreover, several other passages provide yet wider listings (see Romans 12:3–8, Ephesians 4:11–16, etc.).

### **Definition Briefings:**

#### **Apostle**

An “apostle” is simply a “sent one.” Many missionaries, some pastors, some teachers, and some evangelists qualify. Today’s apostle might be a church planter, missionary to an unreached people group, etc. However, we must make the

distinction between the first century Apostles and those with apostolic callings today.

The first-century Apostles were eye witnesses to the resurrected Christ and specifically commissioned by the Lord Himself (see Acts 1:1–3, Galatians 1:1, 1 Corinthians 9:1, Acts 26:16–18, etc.). Therefore, in this context, we must make a distinction between the first-century Apostles and the apostolic giftings of others in the Church Age.

### **Prophet**

A “prophet” is a spokesperson for the Lord. Often the prophetic gifts are insightful—as information is given by the Lord in order to provide exhortation, forth-telling, and/or foretelling. However, once again, we must be careful not to allow for so-called prophetic gifts to be exalted or considered authoritative above that which is contained in the whole of Scripture.

Please note, not all there is to learn is in the Bible. Even the Bible itself declares that we are limited to what is written, but also suggests that there are things yet unwritten we will know (see Daniel 12:8–10, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 12:1–4 and Revelation 10:1–4). However, I must emphasize again—anything one suggests as “a word from the Lord” cannot contradict, redirect, change, or distort what is written in the Scriptures. Any allowance for such will lead to tremendous error. Subjective truth must be servant to objective truth!

## **Teacher**

A “teacher” is an instructor. However, the gift of teacher/teaching is a very distinguished gifting of the Holy Spirit. It is a supernatural enabling given to specific individuals for the assimilation, interpretation, and proclamation of the truths of Scripture.

Many pastors are also gifted with the gift of teaching. In fact, the phrase pastor/teacher is often used in similitude. However, not all pastors are gifted teachers, and some gifted teachers are not called (or gifted) to be pastors.

## **Miracles**

Miracles are generally instantaneous science-defying acts. Miracles defy the laws of nature. For example, parting the Red Sea or walking on water. In the Church Age we might see a miraculous divine physical healing, a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, even speaking in or by an intellectually unlearned language—“*varieties of tongues*”—as mentioned above and below.

## **Gifts of Healing**

The gifts of healings (as discussed earlier) are the supernatural workings of God whereby a person is used to bring about physical recovery from those things that harm or afflict the body. Healings generally occur in process over time. Some might suggest that mental, emotional, and/or spiritual healings may also occur as the result of God working through the gifts of healings.

It is of note that within the Church Age we are commanded to pray for the sick and expect them to recover. However, all miracles, healings, etc., are subject to the sovereign will and purposes of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12:4–7). This should be understood of all the gifts and callings of God.

## **Helps**

Of interest is the fact that the word translated “*helps*” is only used one time in the New Testament. This word suggests a special gifting of the Holy Spirit related to assisting or serving alongside another—for the purposes of God. For example, a wife is a helpmate. A man called to be an assisting pastor has this gifting. The seventy elders who assisted Moses were fitted this way (see Numbers 11:25).

## **Administrations**

Oddly enough, this too is a word used only once in the New Testament. The word indicates a special, Holy Spirit gifting, whereby a person is given supernatural authority in leadership and counsel.

There are many who have learned the principles of leadership. However, there are some whom God has supernaturally gifted to lead.

## **Varieties of Tongues**

Different kinds of tongues are communication languages given whereby the one exercising the gift is

provided the supernatural ability to praise, pray, or sing through non-natural, non-academic means. Some believe the “tongue” may be the language of men and/or angels (see 1 Corinthians 13:1).

Without ruling out the language of angels, the “tongue” may be a human dialect (see Acts 2:7–12) provided by God for supernatural communication with Him (see 1 Corinthians 14:2).

### **All Have the Same Gifts?**

*“Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts.”*

As we have seen, God distributes and administers the gifts according to His own will and purposes (see 1 Corinthians 12:4–6). Therefore, we know that not *“all are apostles,”* *“prophets,”* or *“teachers,”* etc. However, we are *all* called to serve, love, and bless those around us—in Jesus’ name!

As we continue our study we will learn that there are gifts that edify the individual believer (see 1 Corinthians 14:4). However, we will also see that there are gifts that better serve the whole of the body. These are *“the best gifts”* to which Paul referred.

Of all the gifts in the world, all the *“helps”* one might provide, or all the *“leadership skills”* one may be given, none are functioning as intended unless they are motivated by and

seated in unselfish, others-centered love. Love is the “*more excellent way*” (see 1 Corinthians 13).

I love you all,  
Pastor Paul