

IN THE FLESH OR IN THE SPIRIT?

LAST WEEK THE BIBLE SPOKE TO US ALL THAT WE ALL ARE GIFTED, AND THAT GIFT IS TO BE USED TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS AND BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST!

NOW I WANT TO MAKE A DISTINCTION HERE THAT **YOUR TALENTS ARE NOT YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS**. A JOB, WHICH REQUIRES VARYING AMOUNTS OF LEARNING DEVELOPS THOSE TALENTS – WHETHER IT WAS OJT, ON-THE-JOB TRAINING, OR BOOK LEARNING WAS NOT THOUGHT OF AS YOUR VOCATION OR CALLING.

NOW IN EARLY AMERICA THE PURITANS CONSIDERED YOUR JOB AND YOUR VOCATION AS THE SAME THING. TODAY WE GENERALLY DON'T VIEW OUR JOBS AND OUR CALLING THAT WAY, THOUGH A MISSIONARY OR PASTOR WOULD LIKELY EQUATE THE TWO. THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO SENSE THEY ARE “CALLED” INTO A CERTAIN FIELD, AND THE TWO ARE ONE IN THE SAME.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AS MENTIONED HERE IN FIRST CORINTHIANS ARE JUST THAT – GIFTS. THERE IS A **BIG DIFFERENCE** BETWEEN NATURAL TALENTS, WHICH ARE DEVELOPED DURING OUR LIVES BY LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE. MEANWHILE SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE GIVEN TO US TO USE FOR BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST AND TO HELP OTHERS, BRINGING GLORY TO GOD, NOT OURSELVES. THIS IS THE BIG DIFFERENCE OF LIVING IN THE FLESH AND LIVING IN THE SPIRIT.

IN I PETER 4:10 *“God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.”* NOW **SOMETIMES IN THE BIBLE THERE ARE VERSES THAT ARE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY** OR THE VERSE SEEMS TO BE AMBIGUOUS WITH DOUBLE MEANING, AT LEAST AS WE READ IT. HOWEVER, **THAT IS WHY WE COME TOGETHER AS THE BODY OF CHRIST** AT CENTENNIAL TO HEAR THE WORD, STUDY THE WORD AND HELP EACH OTHER TO COMPLETE A PICTURE OF THAT WHICH GOD IS SAYING TO US. REMEMBER TOO, THAT GOD CAN SPEAK TO US INDIVIDUALLY AND CORPORATELY AS A WHOLE BODY. THE BEST EXAMPLE I CAN RECALL IS ONE TIME AT A CHURCH I BELONGED TO THE CHURCH AS A BODY SENSED THAT OUR MISSION WAS TO DO **A-** BUT THIS INDIVIDUAL THOUGHT IT TO DO **B-**. WELL, GOD DOES PUT ON ONE'S HEART TO DO CERTAIN MINISTRY, BUT THROUGH THE BODY OF CHRIST, GOD CAN HAVE THAT BODY ACT AS ONE TO DO SOMETHING ELSE. I HAD A FRIEND WHO THOUGHT EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE THIS HEART FOR WORKING WITH PRISON MINISTRY, BUT I DISCUSSED WITH HER THAT **GOD HAD LAID THAT ON HER HEART, BUT THAT DID NOT MEAN EVERYONE HAD THAT CALL ON THEIR HEART IN THE CHURCH, THEY COULD, BUT IN THIS CASE THEY DID NOT.**

SO TOO IT IS WITH SPIRITUAL GIFTS. LOOK AT VERSE 11 AT THE END OF TODAY'S READING. *“It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. **He alone decides which gift each person should have.**”* **IT IS NOT UP TO US WHICH GIFT OR GIFTS WE RECEIVE.** THE BIBLE ENCOURAGES US TO ASK FOR GIFTS. *“Seek eagerly after love. Set your hearts on spiritual gifts.” Eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit..”* AGAIN THOSE VERSES MAKE IT CLEAR THAT AS A DISCIPLE WE ARE TO SEEK AND USE OUR GIFT THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US. EARLIER IN VERSE 3 IT IS A GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

TO BE ABLE TO SAY “*JESUS IS LORD*”. **WE SING IT, WE SAY IT, AND HOPEFULLY WE LIVE IT.**

WHAT I DISCOVERED AWHILE AGO WAS THAT TWO PEOPLE COULD RECEIVE THE SAME SPIRITUAL GIFT, BUT BECAUSE OF YOUR MAKEUP, YOUR PERSONALITY, AND HOW YOU ARE MOTIVATED YOU BOTH WOULD EXERCISE THAT SAME GIFT DIFFERENTLY.

ONE OF THE GIFTS IS THAT OF BEING A SERVANT. NOW ONE SERVANT MAY BECAUSE OF THEIR PERSONALITY SERVE VERY QUIETLY, IN THE SHADOWS AND YET ANOTHER WITH THE SAME GIFT MAY SERVE IN A VERY VISIBLE WAY. THEIR MOTIVATION MAY BE COMING FROM A DIFFERENT PLACE TOO. WE CAN SEE THAT IN VERSES 4 AND 5 THE WORDS NEVER RING CLEARER “*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit and there are varieties of ministries and the same Lord*” GOD CERTAINLY KNOWS US INSIDE AND OUT, AND WHEN HE GIFTED US HE KNEW THAT IN THIS BEAUTIFUL MOSAIC THAT THOSE GIFTS WOULD SHOW THEMSELVES IN SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS, AND BE BENEFICIAL FOR BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST!!!

GOD IS SURELY AMAZING. WHEN WE BEGIN TO SEE GOD AT WORK, WE CAN BEGIN TO APPRECIATE AND JOIN IN WITH THE PSALMIST THAT GOD IS AMAZING. PSALM 103:2-5 “*O my soul, bless God. From head to toe, I’ll bless His Holy Name! O my soul, bless God, don’t forget a single blessing! He forgives your sins—everyone. He heals your diseases—everyone. He redeems you from hell—saves your life! He crowns you with love and mercy—a paradise crown. He wraps you in goodness—beauty eternal. He renews your youth—you’re always young in his presence.*” NOW DO NOT FORGET THE PSALMIST IS SPEAKING HERE OF OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS, NOT NECESSARILY OUR PHYSICAL ONES.

THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT GOD DOES NOT GIFT US TODAY IN CHURCH. LOOKING AT THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF TIMES OF REVIVAL AND TIMES WHEN INDIVIDUALS HAVE RECEIVED THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR RENEWAL.

NOW WE CAN ALL SEE PEOPLE ARE JUST DIFFERENT, IT CONTRIBUTES TO OUR UNIQUENESS. THE EXPERTS SAY THE WORLD IS NINETY PERCENT EXTROVERTS, OR OUT-GOING PEOPLE, AND ONLY TEN PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE ARE INTROVERTS, QUIET AND TO THEMSELVES. THERE ARE OTHER TRAITS TO OUR PERSONALITY THAT MAKE US UNIQUE. **WE ARE INDEED FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE!!!**

ANOTHER LAYER OF OUR MAKEUP IS OUR MOTIVATIONS. WHAT SPURS US ON? AND HOW DO WE APPROACH A PROBLEM, A COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT OR ANY SITUATION IN OUR LIVES. GOD THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES GIVES US PLENTY OF GUIDANCE ON HOW TO HANDLE SITUATIONS AND PEOPLE, HOWEVER WITH THE VARIETY OF PERSONALITIES AND MOTIVATIONS ONE MAY HANDLE A PROBLEM OR PERSON IN A VERY DIFFERENT WAY THAN ANOTHER.

WE ALL HAVE KNOWN PEOPLE THAT AVOID CONFLICT AT ALL COSTS AND OTHERS WHO SEEM TO RELISH IT! EACH IS LOOKING AT THE SITUATION THROUGH THEIR PRISM, THEIR FRAME OF REFERENCE. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT WHEN GOD INSPIRED SUCH SCRIPTURES AS FOUND IN EPHESIANS 4:2 “*Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each others*

faults because of your love.” OR EPHESIANS 4:32 “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

IN THE CHURCH WHEN PEOPLE DO THINGS REALLY, REALLY WELL, WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE? IS THERE ENVY, JEALOUSY, “SOUR GRAPES”, SELF-PITY, OR OTHER NEGATIVE REACTIONS? WHY? THE VERSES I READ EARLIER ABOUT “*It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. **He alone decides which gift each person should have.***” IT IS NOT UP TO US WHICH GIFT OR GIFTS WE RECEIVE. ARE WE REALLY “SECOND-GUESSING” GOD AND WHAT HE IS DOING OR HAS DONE THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT??? WE CAN NOT BE ENVIOUS, JEALOUS OR WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL IT.

WHEN I HEAR A GREAT SERMON OR IDEA BY A PASTOR, LIKE ADAM HAMILTON, SAY TO MYSELF “*I WISH I COULD PREACH LIKE THAT*” OR “*WISH I COULD DRAW IN SO MANY PEOPLE*”? NO, GOD HAS CALLED ADAM, HE HAS ANSWERED THAT CALL AND THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT USING HIS SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN FOLLOWING GOD.

I HAVE HEARD SAID “*I WON'T DO THAT BECAUSE SO AND SO DOES SUCH A GREAT JOB*” WELL, YOU KNOW SO AND SO MIGHT BE GIFTED AND MOTIVATED TO DO IT THAT WAY. SHOULD THAT PERSON “HIDE” THEIR GIFT AND WHAT GIVES THEM SATISFACTION IN SERVING? NO!! SOME PEOPLE ARE “IDEA” PEOPLE, AND MAYBE YOU OR I CAN'T COME UP WITH ONE GOOD IDEA LET ALONE FIVE OR SIX, BUT THAT'S OKAY. **WE MUST BE THANKFUL GOD HAS GIFTED AND MOTIVATED SOMETHING IN OUR MIDST TO HELP IN THE FUNCTION OF THE BODY.**

I AM GOING TO SAY THIS - “**IF YOU ARE FEELING YOU HAVE NO GIFT THEN YOU HAVEN'T WORKED HARD ENOUGH TO LEARN WHAT THAT GIFT IS WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS GIVEN YOU.**” IF WE BELIEVE THE WORD OF GOD THEN WE ARE ALL GIFTED AND GOD WILL USE US – **IF WE TAKE THE TIME TO SEEK AND LEARN WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN US THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT!!**

NO ONE IS HERE BY ACCIDENT, NO MATTER WHAT THEIR STORY IS. GOD HAS BROUGHT YOU HERE TO CENTENNIAL TO DO SOMETHING WITH YOUR GIFT. HOWEVER, IT REMAINS THAT OUR GOD-GIVEN GIFT OF FREE WILL LEAVES THE CHOICE UP TO US WHETHER WE WILL ANSWER HIS CALL AND USE THAT GIFT!

NOW IN FUTURE WEEKS I AM GOING TO TALK ABOUT THE SPECIFIC GIFTS, BUT I WANTED TO LAY A GROUNDWORK BASED ON SCRIPTURE THAT WE HAVE GIFTS, AND BECAUSE OF OUR MAKEUP, OUR PERSONALITIES, THE WAYS WE ARE MOTIVATED, WE WILL USE OUR GIFTS IN VERY DIFFERENT WAYS AND THAT'S OKAY.

When Yoido Full Gospel Church in South Korea was building its prayer mountain, they struggled in raising the funds for its construction. Pastor David Cho challenged the people again and again and still they could not raise the funds they needed for the project. Then, an elderly woman went to Pastor Cho. She gave him her bowl and chopsticks, her only earthly possessions. She told him that he can

sell those and give the money for the prayer mountain. That selfless act touched the entire church. Donations flooded in until the prayer mountain became a reality. Now, that church is the biggest evangelical church in the whole world.

Our selfless act of unwrapping and using our spiritual gifts to serve people can trigger such a powerful impact. It is really great when the church is working right. We should rightly assess ourselves and we should responsibly access our gifts.

WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, WE ARE GIFTED – EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US, AND GOD HAS GIFTED YOU SO THAT HIS CHURCH MAY FUNCTION PROPERLY. PRAY TO KNOW YOUR GIFT AND HOW TO USE IT FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST CALLED CENTENNIAL. AMEN.