

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
July 23, 2017

Spiritual Gift and Service

1 Peter 4:7-11

4:7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

4:8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

4:9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

4:10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

4:11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies--in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1. Spiritual Gift

In Japan, the word “Charisma” had been used frequently in the past. “Charismatic Hairdresser” or “Charismatic Chef”. This word “Charisma” is used to describe the skill, which is greater than the ones ordinary people possess or the power fascinating people.

However, this word, “Charisma,” originally came from the Scripture. In Greek, “Charis” means “grace,” therefore, “Charisma” is a “gift of grace.” “Charisma” or “Gift”, they are given to the believers who received the Holy Spirit in order that the believers may become the witnesses of Christ and may build church as the body of Christ. The word, “Charisma,” is not the unbelievable skill or being crackpot,

as many people understand it is the meaning of the word.

Every gift is given through the Holy Spirit; therefore, it is the “Gift of Holy Spirit.” In order to receive the gift, you need to receive the the Holy Spirit as a gift first. In Act 2:38, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” “The gift of the Holy Spirit” in this verse, it is translated to “the Holy Spirit as a gift” in New Japan Bible. It means that the Holy Spirit is given to the believers as a gift. You believe in Jesus Christ and receive the Holy Spirit, then the gift of the Holy Spirit is given in order to serve God. There are many people described with the word, “Charismatic” in the world. but they did not receive the Holy Spirit; therefore, they are not have “Charisma” or “Gift” that the Scripture defines. But the believers in Jesus Christ have received the spiritual gift as 1 Peter 4:10 says, “As each has received a gift” They must have received the spiritual gift. In this way, Christians are really “Charismatic” people.

And, the “Gift” in the Scripture is different from natural talents or skills. Obviously, the skills or talents is given also by God, but they belong to the people. Therefore, the people try to improve their skills and talents. They can contribute to the society with their skills and talents; however, they cannot become witness of Christ or build the church as the spiritual body of Christ. They can serve as volunteer workers but not serve for God.

The gift is given to the people in addition to the skills or talents. They can serve for God spiritually with this gift. The skills or talents belong to the each person; therefore, each of them can use the skills and talents for whatever they want. But the gift is given by God so

that Christians are not allowed to use them freely. In verse 10 of today's Scripture, "use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." Since Christians has received the gifts, they are responsible for using and developing the gifts.

If we use the word "Gift" or "Service" in the way of secular world, we will loose the important truth. The words from the Scripture must be understood in the way that the Scripture tells us.

2. Lists of Spiritual Gift

Now, let's see the specific lists of the gifts that God gives to the believers through His Spirit, in order to understand how the gifts work on us.

At the beginning I would like to read I Corinthian 12:28, saying, "And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues." Apostles, prophets and teachers are the ministries in the church, and at the same time means "gifts" to achieve those ministries. That means some people working on such ministries would be going to respectively have the gifts for apostles, prophets and teachers. The apostles conducted many of miracles and hearings at first, yet in the time of the New Testament other disciples also received the gifts of those works. God also gave some of disciples the gift for administrative role in the church of Jesus Christ, because they worked on administrating over the churches. Finally, Peter wrote about "various kinds of tongues," and it was utilized for the works of the church and encouragement of faith along with personal state of things.

We have just focused on 8 gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, but we could see more gifts in Roman 12. According to Roman 12:6-8, “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.” We see 7 gifts here: “prophecy,” “service,” “teaching,” “exhortation,” “contribution,” “leading,” and “mercy acts.” I don’t see the relationship between those 7 gifts and the special positions in the churches, but every member of the church may also teach, lead and help others in their own lives. The gifts of the Spirits are appeared not only in the special events like miracles and healing, but also in the daily events like administrating and mercy acts.

We have one more list. It is Isaiah 11:1-2, saying, “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” Isaiah foretold here the gifts of Savior, but the followers of Jesus Christ should also call for these gifts. You may have heard of the “Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit,” considered very important throughout the Christian history, added “Piety, the Love for God” to “wisdom and understanding,” “counsel and might,” “knowledge and fear of God.” In this list, we can find the truth that the spiritual gifts would strengthen the inside of believers and help them make some improvements on their service, as well as appear in the ministries of

the church.

The gifts of the Spirits are corresponding to the fruits of the Spirit. “Love” is the very first one out of the fruit, and in 1 Corinthians 13, it’s the most excellent gift among the gifts of the Spirit and the one all Christians should pursue. In the present time, people are easily tempted by the visible stuffs. Since the most important thing is not visible, we should always remember the gift that dwells in our inside character, and actually pray for them to be given.

3. Invitation to Repentance

1 Peter 4:11 is also a list of gifts “whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies”. Here, Peter grouped various gifts into two categories: gift of speaking the Word of God and gift of serving.

Since God’s word is spiritual in nature, we can understand that the service of preaching and teaching is done by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then, what about other services? We don’t need the gift of the Holy Spirit to engage in other services? We don’t need to learn God’s word or to train ourselves for faith to engage in other services? No, it’s never true.

In the Jerusalem Church where people complained to Apostles about distribution of food to widows, they assigned seven men for “the service of the table” in order that they can devote themselves to “the service of the Word.” If it were only for serving foods to the widows, they could have hired someone with good management skills. If it were only to improve the communication with Hebrew or Greek speaking people, then they could have hired a person who can

speak in both languages fluently. But what was asked for these seven men was that they should be “full of the Spirit and wisdom, and full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:3, 5). Even it was for the service of food distribution, the wisdom to look into the spiritual problems of the church was needed. Moreover, the faith to work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit was needed, and it is truly the same for our church in present times.

It is often suggested that those with the high social status should also take a leadership position in the church, but according to my own experience, it does not seem to work in the church only because the person has a high social status or ability. School teachers are not necessarily good Sunday school teachers. Of course, if the person of high social status has been already given the Spiritual gift, then that is wonderful. Although I've seen those examples, most of the time, I saw the ordinary people beautifully served as Deacons at the church, and many of them were given abundant gifts and led to the better services through the assigned services.

The Holy Spirit is the living God. The gift of Holy Spirit is not just fixed one. The Holy Spirit makes the gift grow through services. If you are done with one service, then the Holy Spirit will give you more gifts for the next service. We need to serve with gift and receive more gifts through service. Let's seek gift with faith.

I pray that the church will be a place of abundant gift. But it does not mean that I pray only for people with talents and ability will come to church. The purpose of service at the church is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and build the body of Christ. Even if it does not directly speak of God's word, every service is related to the Spirit and

faith. These cannot be achieved only by human ability. If we aim to do it with human ability, the outcome does not go beyond the human level. The work of the church should be achieved by the gifts, not by human talents or ability. Whatever service we do, it should be achieved through the learning of God's word, nurturing the faith, and through faith and gifts.

If the work of churches is performed according to one's ability or talents, then there comes human pride and self-satisfaction. I know a person who had been hopping the church trying to find a place to serve. As I talked to this person, I found that he/she was looking for a place to show his/her talent,s not to fill the need for the church. For this person, the church was just a place for activities or self-achievement. If you try to do the work of God with your talents or ability, you may feel that you are doing something good, but it won't connect to the purpose of God. The true service for God, even if it is a tiny work, will surely bear good fruits if you work with faith and gifts.

Today's verses ends with solemn words; "in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Every gift and service is to glorify God. Moses, Isaiah, Peter and Paul, those who received gifts and called in for service, encountered God's glory and sought for the glory. We would like to follow them as well. Let us give glory to God through using the gifts we have received from God.

(Prayer)

Heavenly Father, we thank You that You sent Your Son Jesus to Hades

for our salvation. We can be saved from sin, death, and judgment by the sufferings and glory of Lord Jesus. We can live with power and die in peace because of Lord Jesus. Our life and death are in His hands. The Lord is with the believers always and everywhere. Lead us to live our daily life with the Lord. We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus, Amen.