

The Rock: 08-22-2021

The Gifts series

First reading: None

Title: For I decided

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (Pt.1)
(black bible -Pg. 895)

Theme:

All gifts of the Spirit, while useful for the building up of a healthy body of believers, are subservient to the primacy of the Gospel in the life of the believer.

Introduction:

We are starting a brand-new series here at The Rock this week that will take us through the fall called: The Gifts.

I know this isn't the first time I have taught through these, but I also know that it probably won't be the last time either.

Part of the job of a pastor is not so much to teach us anything "new", but rather as I have learned studying under others, it is to remind us of things we should never forget.

Some of you here have gone through the gifts many times in your walk with Jesus, but many of you perhaps have never studied them, or understood what their purpose and meaning is for the Church.

We can all, myself included, benefit, learn more and see things perhaps clearer the more we study and ask the Lord to help us.

So, if you know this letter, you also know that the gifts begin in chapter twelve. So why then, am I starting here in chapter two?

A good question, and I do so because this is where Paul started as he sought to help this church get established correctly in the midst of not getting much right at all.

One of the key things we have to learn is that the primary focus for us is not on "the gifts" and the manifestations of them as a sign of health in our church.

Goodness knows one reading of this letter and we learn that. This Corinthian church was very gifted, but very immature. So, to think that way about the gifts, while not incorrect, we are going to learn together that thinking that way is incomplete.

We are going to find that this was the problem with the Corinthian church. They were inward focused and self-centered. Consumers as we would say today, looking for what benefited them and served them.

Paul needed to remind them of why they gathered as a body on Sunday. It wasn't about them, it was about Jesus. It isn't about us, it's about Jesus! Paul needed to establish for them what the primary mission of the Church in the world was and still is.

It is to make Jesus Christ known. Two very clear statements by Jesus himself, one of which we just visited a few weeks back in our community series:

-Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

-Acts 1:6-8 (ESV)

"So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said

to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Again, I am not trying to teach something new, but am trying to remind us all of what the Scriptures say in regards to the Holy Spirit and His purpose ultimately in our lives.

He is given for two primary reasons: **First**, to conform us to the likeness of Jesus, and **second**, to empower us to make Jesus known.

To bear witness to what it is Jesus Christ has done in His atoning death on the cross. In other words, everything the Holy Spirit does, glorifies Jesus and His work. Not us!

So, everything we learn from chapter 12-14 has to be placed in that context. That of making Jesus known to the world, and doing so with power, authority, and most importantly, love.

The Story:

So I start here, in my mind, as a way to encourage and to teach. I have heard too many people say that because every gift

isn't showing up in a church every Sunday, we are somehow unhealthy, or missing the mark.

I have also sat with many who believe somehow that they don't have the Holy Spirit because they don't speak in tongues.

Both a Biblically wrong, or at the very least incomplete in the texts we have been given. I want to share a quote that was helpful for me from Alistair Begg's book: Made for His pleasure.

"When the Apostle Paul addressed the Christians in Corinth, he acknowledged his education and spoke as a reasonable man, but he was not afraid to base his address on something that was thought to be foolish: The Gospel message. Signs and wonders may have been the order of the day, but Paul, chose to stay with the proclamation of 'Jesus Christ and Him crucified' (1 Cor 2:2)...because that was the message God had chosen to honor by the accompanying power of His Spirit. (KEY): Until we are prepared to be thought foolish in the eyes of the world, it is unlikely that we will know the power of God being displayed in our lives and ministries."

**-Made for His pleasure. Pg. 158-159 A.
Begg**

The outworking of the failure to see this first, is seen in the character, abuse, and immaturity of the Christians at Corinth.

Perhaps as homework, you can take some time to read through this letter and see what was happening there.

That's why Paul wrote this letter, and why he went so deep in the teaching to drive home for them the proper focus for the believer.

It has been kept for us also as a way to learn and live with the gifts, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, so we don't make the same mistakes.

If we are going to engage those around us with the Gospel, and we must, then we have to do so in a way which clearly shows Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation, the only hope in a pluralistic and secular society.

One which continues to reject any notion that we are in need of a savior, say nothing of the gifting that God has given to us to live a life which glorifies Him and builds His people up.

It also needs to be done in such a way where those who don't know Jesus can understand Him without all the

distractions of weird behavior and self-centered focus.

The message of the Gospel never changes, but the methods we use to share it do. The culture is different today than even two years ago.

It's one of the reasons Paul says this in chapter nine:

-1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (ESV)

"For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings."

Paul is not wishy-washy and weak. Remember a couple weeks ago we learned about how he engaged the folks in Athens. He understood his audience and culture.

He met them at a place and a point where they understood, and then walked them to Jesus as the answer!

All things to all people -not compromising himself or violating the gospel, but making himself a servant for the cause of Christ to all in his community.

This is a place where we tend to get hung up. How do we engage unbelievers around us? Paul makes it clear here in words, just as Jesus did in practice.

Think of the woman at the well, Matthew the tax collector. Meet people where they are at, enter their world, their story, but purposefully so. Not manipulative, but in genuine love and care for a soul which is lost.

Now, I take this time to walk us all through this because it is good and important that we understand the ground when it comes to the gifts and their purpose in the life of each believer and the Church.

So, to the older folks I say, with the utmost respect that I am sorry, but we are in much different times. That means the times demand different methods and measures of engagement with the

unchanging and uncompromising message of the gospel.

To the young, I say, don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. Just because, perhaps we missed the mark in some ways doesn't mean the gifts need to be parked and never looked at because it and they are weird and people might just think we are foolish.

The church is not all about meeting your personal needs and comforts, as well as justifying the feelings of the day as though how we feel at a particular moment is "truth".

For us all to remember here, just because we are post-modern and post-gospel doesn't mean we ignore uncomfortable and sometimes weirdly unexplainable things for the sake of the comfort of an unbeliever.

The Bible stubbornly sits in front of us saying what it says, and I have no wiggle room to change that, avoid the tough stuff and not say what needs to be said, most especially in light of the culture God has set us in.

We cannot baptize into orthodoxy the new "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" which say the unpardonable sin is the one that says to someone: "You are wrong."

To quote Mark Batterson, "We live in a day where it is wrong to say something or someone is wrong, and I think that's wrong."

You see, the Scriptures bring us into the truth, and they keep us balanced. Doing so in a world that is totally out of balance, because of the belief that there is no real truth.

We see here as Paul writes to his friends in Corinth, that he wants peace and unity among the believers (a theme he never lets go of in any of his letters), because that is the call of God for us in Christ.

At the same time, and we have experienced this over the last five or so years, that the message of the gospel is dynamically affected by the way in which the Church behaves within the culture, what it is she attaches herself to, and how she lives out this message.

You see, cultural subversion only happens when we are in the culture, holding out the counter-cultural message of Jesus. Doing so in such a way that draws people to Him, not push them away.

Let's remember the primary reason as to why we gather. We do so first of all for the glory of God. Second, we do so for

our edification and equipping (discipleship and learning). Listen to Paul as he writes to the Ephesian churches, we read this last week as well:

-Ephesians 4:11-16 (ESV)

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

Paul needs to sort out for this particular church in Corinth, who had become arrogant, self-absorbed, and confused in their teaching, that the

primary mission for them had been lost in the clouds of self-centered behavior.

Who I follow, what gifts I have, who baptized me, and worst of all -a sexual sin that even the pagans around them thought to bizarre to practice.

What was happening was that the credibility of the gospel was being questioned and even mocked because of the Churches behavior.

Jesus Christ and Him crucified was lost in it all. This letter was written to real people, in a real place, at a real time in history.

It was preserved for us and given to us by the Holy Spirit for our benefit. Why? So we don't get stuck in the same muck and mire they did.

So, in the weeks ahead, you may hear things you already know, you may learn something you've never learned or see something perhaps you've never seen.

My prayer is that together, as a community we circle around the things Paul is teaching us and grow in them, in a way that glorifies God and builds each other up.

Because ultimately, we are going to find that those are the two primary purposes for the gifts.