

THE GIFT OF THE APOSTLE

(Selected Scriptures)

Intro: Series on spiritual gifts (spiritual gifts are not the gift of eternal life)

Review: Last week, we defined spiritual gifts this way: “Spiritual gifts are the particular endowments (or, talents) given by the Spirit to all believers that enable them to serve others for the building up of the church.” Then, we looked at why God gives each of us who are saved a spiritual gift---all the benefits that come to believers when each of us are using our spiritual gift.

This week and next week, I would like to focus on the gifts of apostleship and prophecy. And the reason for this is that these are the two spiritual gifts that are the most misunderstood and misused.

And since we don’t have as much material to cover today as last week, we might have time for more Q & A today at the end of the message.

Lesson #1 is a simple “review” lesson:

1. **The Holy Spirit gives each believer a spiritual gift at the moment of faith in Christ.**

1 Peter 4:10-----¹⁰ As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Now, Scripture does not tell us specifically **when** we get our spiritual gift, but since 1 Peter 4:10 tells us that **all** believers have received a gift from the HS, it makes sense that we received this gift the moment we were saved. If we got it sometime AFTER we were saved, (or, if we needed to do something to get it) it *seems like* God would have told us that.

2. **The Lord Jesus gives gifted people to the local assemblies of believers.**

Ephesians 4:8 says that Jesus “gave gifts [= gifted people] to men.” What kinds of gifted people? “And He Himself gave some to be **apostles**, some **prophets**, some **evangelists**, and some **pastors** and **teachers**” (Eph 4:11).

Though Christ is no longer giving gifted people like apostles and prophets to the church, He is still providing local churches with teachers, pastors, administrators, helpers, etc.

3. **The highest and most valuable gift that Christ gave to the early church was the apostles.**

“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” (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Because the New Testament was not written yet in the years just after Christ’s death,

there was a need for leaders who had a gift from God to oversee the crucial laying of the foundation of God's church. It is interesting that Paul referred to himself as a "wise master builder":

"According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it" (1 Cor 3:10).

The apostles/prophets received "blueprints" (= divine revelation) from God that no one on earth had access to:

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:11-12).

WHAT MADE THE APOSTLES UNIQUE?

The question we must ask is this: "Is the Spirit of God still gifting people today with the apostolic gift?" If not, what made the apostles unique?

1. The apostles (and prophets) were the foundation of the church

Ephesians 2:19-20 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built **on the foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.

It is the nature of a building that you do not continue to build the foundation. Once it is laid, the superstructure is then built upon it. 2,000 years ago the *foundation* of the church was laid, but the *superstructure* (= every person who gets saved) continues to be built.

2. The apostles had the authority to do miraculous signs that other believers did not do

2 Corinthians 12:11-12 I have become a fool in boasting; you have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. ¹² Truly **the signs of an apostle** were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

If doing miracles had been a common experience of every Christian, it would have been foolish for Paul to try to prove his apostleship by citing the miracles he had done.

Some of the miracles performed by the apostles:

- Lame man healed (Acts 3:3-11).
- Sick people healed by Peter's shadow (Acts 5:12-16).
- Dorcas raised from the dead (Acts 9:36-42).
- Eutychus raised from the dead (Acts 20:9-12).
- Paul bitten by poisonous snake—no effect (Acts 28:1-6).

Miracles were performed only by the apostles, and a very few associates specially commissioned by the apostles. "Then fear came upon every soul, **and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles**" (Acts 2:43). Notice, "every soul" revered God but "wonders and sign" were done by the apostles.

3. The apostles were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ

1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? **Have I not seen Jesus Christ our**

Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

Only those who had seen the resurrected Christ in person could be apostles.

4. The apostles were personally chosen by Christ (cf. Matt. 10:1-4)

Acts 1:1-2 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles **whom He had chosen...**

Galatians 1:1 **Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)...**

5. The apostles have a unique place of honor in history

For all eternity, the twelve apostles will be honored by having their name ascribed to one of the twelve foundation stones of the city of God called *The New Jerusalem*.

Revelation 21:14 Now the wall of the city [= The New Jerusalem] had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

If you are wondering why only twelve apostles are honored here (even though Paul & Barnabas were also apostles, Acts 14:14) you have to keep in mind that the city spoken of here is *The New Jerusalem*. The early chapters of Acts deal with the spread of the gospel among the *Jews*. In fact, when the early believers were scattered all over the world because of persecution (see Acts 8:1) the 12 apostles ***remained in Jerusalem***. Paul and Barnabas, on the other hand, were apostles to the Gentiles primarily. So, most likely, the names on the foundations would be of the original 11 (Matt. 10:1-4) plus Judas Iscariot's replacement (Matthias, Acts 1).

Conclusion

Question: Is God's Spirit still giving the gift of apostleship to people today? (or, can pastors put the word "APOSTLE" in front of their name and put it on the church sign?)

Answer: No. The only way that we could validate a gift as being in operation in our era is to determine if:

- 1. It is listed in Scripture** (If it is not, it cannot be called a spiritual gift). A person may be gifted as a musician, but musical ability cannot be properly called a spiritual gift.
- 2. If it is listed in Scripture** (e.g., apostleship) **is the gift operating the way it was in the Bible.** (If it is not, the claim to have such a gift is biblically invalid). For example, a person today may **claim** to have the gift of apostleship. However, based on our points listed above, such a possibility is impossible in light of Scripture.

Q & A