

**Session # 19 on The Second Commandment - “Normative Gifts are Supernatural Gifts”; Adult Sunday School class for January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014, and presented by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

Acts 17, verses 22-25 - “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To the Unknown God.’ “Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.” “Nor is He worshiped with men hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.” Now look at verse 29. “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.” “Truly these times God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.”

We have been studying together this amazing subject of the spiritual gifts in relation to the local church and its worship. In order to keep the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment: “You shall not make any carved image or likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.” “For I the Lord am a jealous God... We need to see that the intent of this commandment is far broader than our not worshiping God by making a graven image. The intent of this commandment is that we would not add anything of our devising, as Acts 17: 29 says. We should not add to God’s worship our own thoughts of how He ought to be worshiped; our imaginations, or desires, things of our own devising, to what God has commanded us to do in the New Testament concerning His worship. What God has given to us in our commanded activities of worship is really very simple; prayer, the reading of the Scripture, Congregational singing, giving of our tithes and offerings, observance of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and the preaching of the word.

Some people, in our generation, and for the past few generations, have tried to re-introduce the revelatory gifts into the worship service of the churches, when they ceased at the end of the Apostolic era in the early Church. I have tried to show you over past sessions that this is not a valid thing to do because, according to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13: 8-10, these revelatory gifts would cease. They would cease when “the perfect” would come; that is when the word of God was canonized. Jonathan Edward’s writing on this subject is particularly good. In his treatise “Charity and its Fruits, P. 362, he says: “When the Christian church first began after Christ’s ascension, that was the infancy of the church, and then it needed miracles and prophecies to establish it. But being once established, and the canon of Scripture completed, they ceased.” “Which by the Apostle’s arguing shows the imperfection of them, and how much inferior they are to the influence of the spirit of God in divine love.” “Why therefore should we expect that they should be restored again when the church is come, as it were, to the stature of a man?” “See what the Apostle says in the eleventh verse, ‘When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.’ “The Apostle seems to call these gifts of prophecy and working miracles childish things in comparison with that nobler fruit of the Spirit, divine love.” (End of quote)

I have said to you that I believe that the revelatory gifts, the gifts which have ceased, are listed for us in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12: 1-11, and they are all what I would term, extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit. Each of these gifts evidences a greater than normal power, a supernatural ability, which is given to the person who has them, which no longer is given to

Christians today. But what I want to attempt to show this morning is that even though these gifts no longer exist today, it does not mean that the normative gifts which remain today are not supernatural. They are all given by the Holy Spirit, and used by the believer in His power. All saving grace and the fruit of the Spirit, and all spiritual gifts given by Christ are supernatural. In their exercise the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit is manifested “for the profit of all” as it says in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12: 7. There being normative gifts simply means that the Holy Spirit manifests his working and His power through the persons using their gifts in way that shows people, both members of the church and those outside, the importance of the love of Jesus Christ, and working together to see Christ’s kingdom go forward in accordance with the word of God. There is nothing in the use and exercise of normative gifts that speaks to the people who are being ministered to, as involving any direct revelation from God. The Spirit of God is present however, in the worship of God, and the activities of the church gathered, and also at work when the people go back home and to their jobs and normal routine, and He may manifest his power in great ways in relation to the conversion of people, or people being helped, in very wonderful ways which bring glory and honor to God and to Christ. Or His working may not be readily apprehended by the people who have the gift and are using it, or by the people being ministered unto. God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in all of these workings as to the extent He reveals what is spiritually taking place behind the scenes or in people’s hearts.

One of the reasons that I believe that the revelatory gifts have ceased is because you do not find these same gifts listed in the list of gifts which are mentioned in the book of Romans, chapter 12. We have seen that there were spiritual gifts which were revelatory, fully listed in 1st Corinthians alone, and then there were gifts mentioned by the Apostle Paul here, which were meant to be understood as being used both before and after the Scriptures were canonized. I am referring to these gifts as the “normative” gifts; the spiritual gifts which have been given to the Church which existed during the time of the revelatory gifts, but which alone would continue to exist after the revelatory gifts had ceased. You can see them listed for us if you will turn over with me to Romans 12, verses 3-16. “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble.”

The whole emphasis of these gifts, as they are listed, is to show the church at Rome, and ourselves in our generation, the great importance of love and thoughtfulness of each individual believer in the body of Christ, in each local church. There is no need of regulation of these gifts, as before took place, in relation to the church at Corinth. In fact, the only indication here of a revelatory gift is the mention of the gift of prophecy, and Paul does so with the words, “Let us

prophesy according to the proportion of our faith”. I believe that in this context this does not so much seem to indicate a revelatory gift being used, but what would come to be the true use of the teaching and preaching gift given by the Holy Spirit throughout the rest of the Church age; that is, a man’s ministering the word of God in the public assembly, according to the proportion of his faith. Rather than his speaking of direct revelation from God or fore-telling of what would happen in future, it seems to be referring to the preaching and teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures and whatever New Testament Scriptures existed at that time, according to what those persons had learned by the Spirit of God’s regular illumination to their minds. Whatever New Testament books of the Bible which were in existence and distributed as Scriptures at that time would also apply. The revelatory gifts evidently were not as much needed at Rome as at Corinth, according to the Holy Spirit’s distribution of them. 1st Corinthians was written by Paul somewhere from about 56-60 A.D., and Romans in 61 A.D. It seems apparent that a good portion of the knowledge which had been written down, or would be written down, was by this time known and being communicated to the churches which the Apostles Paul and Peter and John had established. Almost all that was related to gender roles and responsibilities and the use of the revelatory gifts was communicated to the church of Corinth in writing by the Apostle Paul. 2nd Corinthians has nothing on the subject of gifts, and it was written a year or so after the first letter.

In thinking about the **normative gifts** that are listed here, we can see what gifts both men and women may be given by the Holy Spirit, and use, in the context of the local church. Each Christian will have at least one of these gifts. There are 7 of them. **Prophecy** - An authoritative word of God in relation to the Scriptures, which in this context, seems directly to be given by the Holy Spirit to those who are, or who are in the process of becoming, the pastors and elders of the local church. This gift has particular application to the formal public teaching and preaching of the word of God in the worship services of the church); **Ministry** (that is, those who have a gift to exercise in the formal and informal counseling ministries of the church; which also involves the coordinating of ministries of serving in the body of Christ by ruling elders and deacons); **Teaching** - Which would be imparting of the knowledge of doctrinal and practical instructions on the promises of God which are to be believed, and precepts and principles of the word of God to be received by all disciples; which I believe, is being distinguished from the formal preaching and teaching in worship, and would include teaching on all levels; adults and young people and children. Both men and women would be given this gift by the Holy Spirit, and it would be used appropriately by women to women and children, but not over men. **Exhortation** (this would go hand in hand with the former gift and involve not only the didactic imparting of the knowledge of the doctrines of the Scriptures, but also giving an authoritative practical applications of truth as to what should be done by the disciple or learner of the truth of the Scriptures in relation to the commandments of God), **Giving** - This refers to people who have been given a gift to give of themselves and their resources; and by the leading of the Holy Spirit are always on the look-out to see how they might help in this wonderful way, context of the local church, and also outside of the local church to other churches and people in need. **Leading** – Those men (and women appropriately using their gift in submission to their husband and the male leadership of the church) who are given a gift to take the initiative spiritually-speaking and practically speaking to do good things and to lead others into doing good things and thereby fulfilling what is commanded in the word of God. This gift would be used, not in a selfish or insensitive or unloving way, but out of love to Christ and with a great desire for the highest welfare and usefulness of each member in the body of Christ. **Mercy** - A gift spiritually given, and bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon certain particular people, that they would have the ability to tenderly and sensitively minister to people in physical or spiritual need.

Now, I hope that you can see that there is here a whole different tenor to the nature of these normative gifts which is set forth for us here in the book of Romans, than what we see in Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians. The emphasis is not so much upon the revelation of knowledge as it is upon helping others to understand and do according to what had already been revealed. Even prophecy, although it leads the list here, is not mentioned in its full revelatory glory, but the person having that speaking gift would use it in proportion to their faith; in proportion to their ability to understand what had already been revealed in Scripture, and what would be needed to bring out the truth of the doctrine already given to the church by the Apostle Paul, in both spoken and written form. The gifts of ministry, of teaching, of exhortation, of giving, of leading, of mercy, are all mentioned here; notice that they were never mentioned in the book of 1st Corinthians. These are the gifts which exist today; prophecy in the sense of speaking to men from what already has been revealed and inscripturated; speaking edification, exhortation, and comfort from the doctrines and truths already given by the apostles and prophets. No mention of tongues here in the book of Romans at all. No mention of the gifts of miracles; everything related to helpfulness and love in the body of Christ. This was to become the norm for the rest of the Church Age until Christ appears.