

STUDY 9

The Shepherd and His Gifts

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JESUS CHRIST'S SELF-GIVING

The self-giving ministry of Jesus Christ who has come to *serve* (Mark 10:45) the world did not cease with his death, whereby he made atonement for sin, or even with his triumphant resurrection. The ascended Christ—together with the Father—pours out the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, with a view to further self-giving. Like the grain of wheat which falls into the earth and dies (John 12:24), his self-giving is reproductive of *much* fruit. Jesus Christ's self-giving is with a view to fulfilling the intended plan of God for both the church, and for the whole of creation (Eph. 3:9–10).

The self-giving of 'the Word', is seen in the reproduction or self-extension of his own ministry, through the 'word' gifts given to the church. Christ is *the Apostle* (Heb. 3:1) firstly sent, later sending (John 17:8). Christ is *the Prophet* (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22–26). Christ is *the Evangelist* who came preaching the gospel (Isa. 52:7; Mark 1:1, 14), and more—as Forsyth says: 'He became a Gospel to preach'.¹ Christ is *the Pastor*, the 'good shepherd' (John 10:11; 21:15–17; Heb. 13:20). Christ is *the Teacher* (Mark 10:17; John 9:2), addressed as 'Rabbi', who gathered his disciples.

The apostle Paul writes of the ascended 'Christ's gift' and 'gifts' given to his people:

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.⁸ Therefore it is said,
'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive;
he gave gifts to his people' . . .

¹¹ The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers . . . (Eph. 4:7–8, 11).²

'GIFTS' IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament employs the English words 'gift' and 'gifts' to translate three Greek words, *dōrea*, *domata* and *charismata*. All have different meanings. Discussions about 'gifts' can be confusing, especially when the word *pneumatika* is added into the mix. We need clarification. Siew Kiong Tham has helped us in this matter:³

¹ P. T. Forsyth, *The Preaching of Jesus and the Gospel of Christ*, NCPI, Blackwood (1915) 1987, p. 106.

² Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version (italics mine).

³ Siew Kiong Tham helped clarify these terms in his study: '*Dorea, Domata and Charismata*' in *Giving and Thanksgiving in the Church*, NCTM 2000 Pastors' School, Morning Sessions, NCPI, Blackwood, 2000, pp. 46–51.

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1. *Dōrea* (δωρεά) refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit from the Father (Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; 2 Cor. 9:15), or from Christ (Eph. 4:7), and by inference, both (John 4:10). *Dōrea* is also used for the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:15; Heb. 6:4), the two being linked (Rom. 8:4, 10).
2. *Domata* (δόματα) are the fivefold ministry ‘gifts’ (Eph. 4:8, 11) of *apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor* and *teacher*. These people are to equip the saints for ministry, ‘fulfilling a function but not occupying an office’!⁴
3. *Charismata* (χαρίσματα) are the result of the grace (*charis*) of God acting upon our lives, now manifest in gifts for service, such as prophecy, healing, speaking in tongues, forms of assistance and so on. ‘We have [*charismata*] that differ according to the grace given to us’ (Rom. 12:6). Many of these gifts are listed in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12 and 1 Peter 4:10.

Note: It appears from 1 Corinthians 12:28, that the *domatic* ministry ‘has a kind of *prius* in relation to the *charismata*’.⁵ However, since all believers are ‘members one of another’, and since all members are to ‘outdo one another in showing honour’ (Rom. 12:10), any notions of superiority and inferiority are entirely absent (yet true love-hierarchy remains and flows).

4. *Pneumatika* (πνευματικά) means something like ‘spirituals’ and not ‘spiritual gifts’ as translated in 1 Corinthians 12:1 and 14:1 (NRSV) thus: ‘*Now concerning spiritual gifts . . .*’ To speak of ‘spiritual gifts’ suggests a dualistic ‘two-tiered experience of the Christian life, whereby elite super-Christians pursue the ‘optional extra’.⁶ *Pneumatika* is difficult to translate into English, but ‘spiritual things’, rather than ‘spiritual gifts’ is preferred:

And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting *spiritual things* to those who are spiritual (1 Cor. 2:13).

Leon Morris comments: ‘Paul is saying that Christians combine “spiritual things” with “spiritual words”. They use words taught by the Spirit.’⁷ The Holy Spirit enables a person to comprehend the depths of God, Christ’s revelation, and to understand the *charismata* he bestows (1 Cor. 2:12). Paul employs the word *pneumatika* only when dealing with the divisive enthusiasts at Corinth. Even dumb idols can elicit ecstasy, miracles, devotion and chaos (1 Cor. 12:2–3). Paul displaces the word *pneumatika* with the serving word, *charisma*, to correct their approach:

Here he is adopting their own terminology, which comprehends under πνευματικά all the powers of miracle and ecstasy . . . which they so passionately seek after, of which they are so inordinately proud and the true meaning of which for the community must therefore be properly evaluated in 1 Cor. 12–14. We must not, however, fail to observe that Paul usually displaces, or rather forcibly

⁴ Geoffrey C. Bingham, *The Beautiful City of God*, Redeemer Baptist Press, Castle Hill, 2001, p. 63.

⁵ G. Bingham, *The Beautiful City of God*, ‘And God has appointed in the church *first* apostles, *second* prophets, *third* teachers; *then* deeds of power, *then* gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues’ (1 Cor. 12:28).

⁶ S. K. Tham, ‘*Dorea, Domata* and *Charismata*’, p. 48.

⁷ Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, IVP, Grand Rapids (1985) 1995, p. 58.

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removes, the term *πνευματικά* and substitutes for it the idea of charisma; because he takes such pains to do this, it is clearly meant to be the starting-point of a theological critique.⁸

THE *DOMATA* GIFTS OF MINISTRY

In Ephesians 4:7 Paul speaks of ‘Christ’s gift’ (*δωρεά, dōrea*), namely the Holy Spirit (cf. John 4:10). In Ephesians 4:8 he employs a quotation⁹ from Psalm 68:18:

When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive;
he gave gifts to his people.

In the context of this letter, the ‘gifts’ (*δόματα, domata*) he gave ‘to his people’ are the gifts of ministry. These are listed further down in Ephesians, as follows:

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ (Eph. 4:11–13).

This list of gifts is not an exhaustive one,¹⁰ nor is it a prescriptive one, of something that must be evident or operative in every local or regional church. Rather, it is descriptive of that which was manifest within the early church. It was given to the church universal from the fullness of Christ. The important thing is the intended purpose of the gifts—intention. These gifts were intended ‘for building up the body of Christ’ so that the whole church might grow in love, and so all might share in the action of Christ the Filler—who is filling all things in creation. The intention of Jesus Christ’s life, from incarnation through to ascended victor and beyond, is to redeem, sanctify, glorify and perfect creation. He was sent into the world of sinful humanity, to reconcile all things, unite all things, harmonise all things, and to fill all things:

When it says, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?¹⁰ He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might *fill all things* (Eph. 4:9–10).

The gifts Christ gave relate directly to the filling of all things. The gifting of the church *is* the blessing of God. Love’s edifice is under construction. Christ’s equipped people grow. They move towards that goal where God is ‘all in all’. Maturity displaces immaturity. As all speak the truth in love, Christ’s great mission proceeds:

⁸ Ernst Käsemann, ‘Ministry and Community in the New Testament’, in *Essays in New Testament Themes*, (SCM Press, London, 1964), Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1982, p. 66.

⁹ This reference is in effect, a paraphrase from an Aramaic Targum. It originally tells of a triumphant King ascending the citadel of Sion, and receiving gifts from men; these gifts were the booty following the victory of battle, the spoils taken from the enemy. This booty was later distributed variously, from the throne, to the people of the King’s domain. Here, the quotation does not mention the receiving of the gifts, as such, but only speaks of the gifts being distributed by Christ, the ascended King. Geoffrey Bingham writes:

And His gifts to the Church are throne gifts, earned, we might say, by His Calvary victory (cf. Luke 11:22; Isaiah 53:12). It is not fanciful to think of Satan stealing God’s original gifts to Man (John 10:10) and Christ retrieving and distributing them afresh (see Geoffrey Bingham, *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*, Redeemer Baptist Press, Castle Hill, 1997, p. 53).

¹⁰ Compare Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:1–11; 1 Pet. 4:10–11. For example, 1 Cor. 12:28, ‘And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues’.

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We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming.¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love (Eph. 4:14–16).

We must grow up, in every way, into him who is the head. Maturity flows from hearing the gospel, knowing Christ and what he has done in his cross, and subsequently participating in the unified life of the Triune God, amidst both sinful yet redeemed humanity. The *domata* are not a separate group of leaders, which somehow function apart from the whole church. These *domata* together with the *charismata* are indispensable to the life, growth, action and goal to which the whole church has been called and empowered, and now moves. The gifts given to the church are not in any way to be viewed as other than serving the whole body of Christ in its role:

The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'²² On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,²³ and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect;²⁴ whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member,²⁵ that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another (1 Cor. 12:21–25).

All Things Unified in Christ

In a brief overview of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we need to see that Paul sets forth the mystery of God's will and plan, as being the unification of *all things* in Christ (Eph. 1:9–10). He goes on to show that this unity has to do with the saving work of grace alone (Eph. 2:5–8), wrought in the flesh of the crucified Jesus. Here, God effected the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7), the total removal of hostility between Jew and Gentile, and the creation of one new humanity with full access to the Father, in one Spirit. This new humanity is described as a dynamic edifice, a growing structure (Eph. 2:20–22). It is through the proclamation and the actions of the Christian church, that God, *who created all things*, makes known to everyone the news of the boundless riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8–9), and his power to accomplish that wonderful unification of all things, which he has ever planned. For this reason, it is essential that the church makes every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Roland Allen says of Paul's stress upon unity, that:

He taught unity by taking it for granted. He taught men to realize it as a fact of their Christian experience. He taught his converts to recognize every baptized Christian as a brother. He taught them, as we have seen again and again, the duty of mutual responsibility one for another. He taught them by constantly recalling to their minds their common difficulties and sufferings, referring in his letters to the sufferings of other churches and comparing them with their own. He taught them to practise hospitality one to another. At all times, by all means, he kept the fact of the unity of the Church before their eyes.¹¹

The sevenfold creedal affirmation of Ephesians 4:4–6, *one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all*, declares the

¹¹ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1962, p. 134.

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completeness of the union achieved by God through Jesus Christ, and imparted and applied by the power of the Holy Spirit. The magnificence of this unity finds expression, not in monotonous uniformity, but in a mutually enriching, complimentary diversity. Peter uses the phrase ‘the *manifold* grace of God’ (1 Pet. 4:10; cf. Ps. 104:24). The diversity of gifts (*domata* and *charismata*) together testifies to that amazing unity which flows from the one indescribable gift (*dōrea*). Thanks be to God for his *indescribable gift!* (2 Cor. 9:15).

Unity and Love

Every day we are all faced with highly significant moral or ethical decisions. These may involve national or global leadership; they may involve huge or small personal choices; profound contributions or detrimental actions towards society, church and family situations may occur as a result. At the heart of true living and therefore true building, is what Geoffrey Bingham has called ‘the apostolic model of love’:

The model is that as members of Christ’s body we should hold fast to the head—Christ (Col. 1:18). We should grow up into that head together as members of Christ’s body and members one of another. This ‘holding fast’ is personal enough, and is primarily local in regard to Christ’s body and the fullness with which he has endowed it, but which is his personal presence in the life and actions of his people. In this context, and in this way, *the love of Christ operates in the world*. This is because he is Lord over ‘all things’. He first created them, then redeemed them, and now he commands them.¹²

We all face many complex and incisive questions about suffering, injustice, and evil powers; how should we respond? Should Christians be revolutionaries, reformers, protesters, or quiet conservatives? What does it mean to participate in life with integrity as the church today? Who of Christ’s redeemed sinners can properly articulate the mind of Christ in today’s world? Is it the *World Council of Churches*? Is it signatories of a global *Evangelical Alliance*? Do the *Catholic*, the *Orthodox*, the *Pentecostal* or the *Protestant* make truly authoritative pronouncements? Can a single denomination impart the wisdom needed for the hour? In considering such questions, Geoffrey Bingham commends us to the painful battleground of genuine prayer and painful love, and the exhortation to personally ‘hold fast’ to Christ, who is the head of the church, of love’s edifice. For we can be sure, that God speaks to a person in every detail of their life, so that decisions which require time, effort and energy can be made by faith, constrained by the love of Christ’s Spirit within.

This is where the ‘word’ gifts given to the church are so essential, so wonderful, so profound and yet even so simple, for where ‘each part is working properly’, the way of love can be known and embraced and pursued, by faith and with good hope. These gifts—*apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors* and *teachers*—ensure that the word of Christ and ‘the way’ of life can be heard, known and embraced by God’s people within the context of the church—the local church, and even amidst the wider church. As such, it can be proclaimed to the world too.

¹² Geoffrey Bingham, *Creation and the Liberating Glory*, NCPI, Blackwood, 2004, p. 189.

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Responsiveness to His Gift

Since its inception at Pentecost, Christ has given gifts to the church, and he himself has through his grace imparted mercy personally to each member, and evoked that response needful for genuine participation in his commanding Lordship. Comprehending the existence and activities of the *domata* and *charismata* may help our thinking regarding church structure. But it is not a new or ancient methodology. It should, however, encourage the whole church to be responsive to Christ and to actively participate in the shepherding work, and in being shepherded ourselves. Rather than saying, 'Christ has done it all, there is nothing I can do', or simply leaving it to the exceptionally gifted to respond, we can see that we are all called to be an integral part of the building work, of God's planned love-edifice, for eternity.

Pointing us towards the *twofold* work of the Holy Spirit, Tom Smail sets out how it is that we may personally give, out of the gifts God has given to us:

In him [the Spirit] God gives and man receives; also in him man gives and God receives . . .

So, the function of the Spirit is both to complete the movement of God's grace to us and to begin the movement of our gratitude back to God. Christ gives himself to us and the Spirit makes possible our reception of what he gives. In the Spirit Christ himself in his created humanity is given a glory that does indeed result from his gift to us but is in a real sense our gift to him. On the one hand, the Spirit gives to us what we would not have apart from Christ; on the other, he also gives to Christ, again in Pannenberg's phrase 'from outside himself', a glory that he would not have apart from us.¹³

Paul, as an Example, in His Exercise of 'Word' Gifts

Proclamation, teaching, letter writing, apostleship and even tent making¹⁴ are good gifts from God, to use in one's participation with Christ, in his unification of all things. Paul exercised many gifts in serving the church. However, his 'word' gift as an apostle is *first*: 'woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel' (1 Cor. 9:16).

As an apostle, Paul lived under daily pressure, due in part to his anxiety for all the churches (2 Cor. 11:28). Prior to his departure from Ephesus he called the elders together (Acts 20:17) to meet with him. Having already taught them the whole counsel of God, he now exhorted them to keep watch over themselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, to shepherd the church of God obtained with the blood of the Father's own Son (Acts 20:28–29). He knew that wolves would come in, not sparing the flock. So he commended them to God and to the word of his grace, reassuring them that this message is able to build up the church and give them an eternal inheritance among all who are sanctified (Acts 20:32).

We note here, that it was *the Holy Spirit* who had made the elders overseers. Further, Paul reminds the Ephesian elders that his own self-supporting ministry and free self-giving in supporting the weak is an example of what Jesus meant when he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35). Jesus himself, having ascended into heaven, received the Holy Spirit from the Father, and was then more blessed in his giving than receiving, as he poured out the Holy Spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2:33).

As we know, the ascension is described in Acts 1:9–11 and Luke 24:50–51. The letter of Paul to the Ephesians makes much of the current immeasurable and powerful

¹³ Tom Smail, *The Giving Gift*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, (1988) 1994, pp. 64–5.

¹⁴ Acts 18:3, 'by trade they were tentmakers'.

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work of Jesus, as the ascended Christ, who is raised from the dead and seated at the Father's right hand in the heavenly places, *far above* all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come (Eph. 1:19–21). The gifted Paul, addressed each gifted person:

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift (Eph. 4:7).

In 1 Corinthians 12:7, Paul said of those in Christ, 'To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good'. This one verse encapsulates Paul's entire thrust in correcting the errors in the Corinthian church. Similarly in Romans 12:6 (RSV) we read of 'Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them'. This phrase, 'let us use them' is a call to be part of Christ's present-day activity, of filling all things with meaning and significance—that would otherwise remain vain, empty and futile. The Christian life, even 'when death is near, and life is vain' is not given over to futility because suffering is God's gift to the body (1 Cor. 12:26; 1 Pet. 4:13), and ultimately part of the building up, and filling of all things.

Working in Tandem, Responding to Feedback

With the exception of the stationary *pastor*, the other four *domata* (Eph. 4:11) are mobile ministries given for the church as a whole. It is helpful to see that these five ministry gifts are never solo operations, but 'work in tandem',¹⁵ providing leadership in which the blessing of the whole church takes place.

All ministries are also interdependent on a kind of 'feedback loop' within the church itself. While the physical body is not an analogy of the church body, it can be useful to consider the way our physical bodies function, with interrelated hierarchies:

The thyroid gland, while controlling the metabolism in the body, is subject to the control from the pituitary gland in the brain and the pituitary gland is in turn subject to the regulation from the hypothalamus. While there is this hierarchy of operations, each controlling centre is in turn subject to feedback from the organ they control.¹⁶

Working properly together, responsively, the mutual indwelling of members of the church emulate the hierarchical love-communion life of the Father, Son and Spirit.

¹⁵ For further discussion, see G. C. Bingham, *The Beautiful City of God*, p. 49.

¹⁶ For further discussion, see G. C. Bingham, *The Beautiful City of God*, p. 63, where this quotation is taken from Siew Kiong Tham, NCTM, Monday Pastors' Study Group, 6/8/01, entitled 'The Body of Christ and the Human Body'.