***Spiritual Gifts  
  
Colossians 1:15-20  
  
COL-139***

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Our subject is "Hymn in Honor of Christ," number 29 in Colossians 1:15-20.

Psalm 119, the longest Psalm in the Bible, in verse 89 is the basis for the Scripture which you see on our communion table before you. Psalm 119:89: "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." The word "settled" there means that it stands firm: "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." When the Church of the Open Door of Los Angeles, California used to meet in downtown Los Angeles, in that little square area, their building had across the very top on the cornice, these words inscribed. And as you came in and you looked up, there you saw what that church stood for: "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven." What this declares to us is that God's Word recorded in Scripture as doctrinal principles for eternal and temporal life has been settled in heaven. The revelation is complete, and it now stands firm. What God has spoken for our instruction stands now, and forever is not going to be changed.

The same essential revelation for life, however, is often ignored on earth, because Christians, in their local churches, are denied expository preaching to inform them of God's thinking. Now, there are lots of Christians who go along with that nonsense, for whatever reason – many of them because they don't know better. But someday they will know better. Someday they will stand there at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and they'll look back at all those fun times they had in local church preaching services, and all the hoopla, and all the emotional manipulation that they experienced. And tears will be flowing down their face as they look back and realize that they've lost their lives. And as other Christians step up, and they're called up before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the Lord says, "Well done thou good and faithful servant. Come on over here. Here's my reward. Here are the treasures you have stored in heaven. Take them. Enjoy them forever. And other Christians will stand there, wringing their hands, tears pouring down their cheeks: "How could this be? I was so sincere. It seemed so right. It was such fun to go to those services – all that singing, and all that clapping, and all that waving hands over the head. How could that not have been what God wanted me to do?"

Well, the only way you can answer that question, whether it is or not, is from the Word of God. The mind of man is corrupt. It fell in the Garden of Eden. It was distorted from reality, and it will never find the mind of God on its own. The key to the local church ministry is expository preaching. Do you know what that means? Explaining the Bible. And you don't explain the Bible by jumping from a verse here, and a verse there, and a verse here, and a verse there. Anytime I see on these church bulletin boards outside around town, the preacher announcing his text for that Sunday, and then another text over here someplace else, and another text the next week, I know he's playing the game of their emotions. He's preparing some red meat to throw out to the lions so that they're going to view him as a marvelous preacher.

The Word of God in Scripture is not subject to revision by the mind of man, or the opinions that are prevalent in society at some particular point in time. And that's what Psalm 119:89 says: "Forever O Lord, Thy word stands firm in heaven." Christians without the knowledge of this completed revelation will perish spiritually in Satan's world. Yes, they'll go to heaven. They won't lose their salvation, but they will die spiritually in the impact of their lives, because they don't have the nourishment. The only nourishment is the Word of God. And if you don't feed upon the Word of God, you will die.

The pastor-teacher in the local church is the one who, in this century, and this point in time, during the church age, has been assigned the duty and held responsible and accountable by God for feeding spiritual truth (spiritual food) to the sheep of God in the form of the doctrines of Scripture. The Bible comes back again and again and again to the necessity of the Word of God. And you would think that this would be self-evident, but it is not when people don't know what is in Scripture.

For example, in John 17:17, Jesus, in his High Priestly prayer, the night before He was crucified, of the believers who are coming: "Sanctify them in the truth." The word "sanctify" means "Set them aside. Engulf them. Encase them. Put them in a cocoon of the truth. Well, what's the truth? "Thy Word is truth." It is the right of every Christian to be able to walk through his life surrounded by a knowledge of the truth of the Word of God – of the principles of doctrine.

When the apostle Paul was advising his young associate Timothy in the conduct of his ministry, Paul had this to say, in 1 Timothy 4:6, in pointing out these things, here in the context of godly living to the brethren, "You will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith of the sound doctrine which you have been following." Spiritual life is nourished on sound doctrine. And a Christian who knows sound doctrine gets a big case of spiritual indigestion when he is confronted with false doctrine.

In 1 Timothy 4:13, Paul says, "Until I come," speaking to Timothy, "give attention to the public reading of Scripture; to exhortation; and, to teaching." This is what was done in New Testament church. They got up and they read the Scriptures to the people; they exhorted the life that should follow from the Scriptures which they had read; and, they taught them the basic principles upon which these admonitions were based.

1 Timothy, 4:16: "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching. Persevere in these things. For as you do this, you'll ensure salvation, both for yourself, and for those who hear you. You cannot lead a person to Christ if you don't follow the biblical principles. You cannot lead a person to salvation if you do not give him the truth of what constitutes salvation – the gospel of the grace of God. That's the doctrine upon which salvation can be acquired. Nothing else will do it. And the Word of God makes it clear. It's all of Him, and none of us. And if you pay close attention to doctrine, you'll do it right. You won't do the stupid thing that I talked about this morning, of praying that Jesus would come into your life. Nobody will ever get to heaven by praying that Jesus would come into his life.

In 1 Timothy 5:17, we read, "Let the elders (the pastor-teachers) who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching." And how apropos it is that the Bible says, "Work hard." It is very hard business to get up to examine the Scriptures by the HICEE technique (Hermeneutics; Isagogics; Categories of doctrine; Exegesis; and, Etymology) – to go from the original language to convey what is in there, and what the Spirit of God is saying in a way that is compatible with all of Scripture. And then to put it all together in some usable, logical, understandable form, and then to be able to get up and deliver it. That is what he's talking about. You have to work hard at preaching and at teaching, or you can't do it. Now, when you learn the subject very well, you don't have to work very hard to tell it again. That's why it's such fun for preachers to preach the gospel every service. No matter where they are, they jump right off.

**Charles Spurgeon**

I've read many of the sermons of Charles Spurgeon, a great English preacher, and who was a great speaker; a great orator; and, a man who made an impact upon the religious life of England. But I also have read Charles Spurgeon where he said, "I take my text, and no matter what the text is, I go straight to the cross. Everybody says, "Ah, how wonderful." And most preachers wouldn't dare criticize Charles Spurgeon. But then when I read Charles Spurgeon's sermons, he was an evangelist. Yes, he had a great tabernacle in London. Yes, many people were saved, but he didn't preach the full counsel of the Word of God. He wasn't speaking to Christians. He was an evangelist who had no business being in a pulpit. Pastor-teachers are supposed to be in a pulpit. So, I understood exactly what he meant. Whatever text I take from the Bible, I take it so it can be a jumping off place to preach the gospel. What the text means, the people will never learn. What the doctrinal instruction of that text is, they'll never come to know. I'm not going to tell them that. I'm going to tell them the same old thing that I've told them every Sunday: how to get to heaven. The result is the Christians are spiritually malnourished. They lack spiritual strength. And when spiritual strength breaks down, they lack physical strength. The thing has a terrible chain reaction.

Now, this same condition, a focus upon feeding of the Word of God, was God's order in the Old Testament as well. Please notice something in 2 Chronicles 15:1-7. I was astounded as I read this Scripture recently: "Now the Spirit of God came to Azariah the son of Obed." This is the only time in the Bible Azariah is mentioned, but he is here a communicator of the mind of God: "And he went out to meet Asa." Asa had been king in Israel, and who had been very faithful in religious reforms, getting rid of the pagan places of worship that Israel had established, and getting the country back to God: "And he went out to meet Asa, and he said to him, "Listen to me, Asa, and all, Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find him. But if you forsake Him, He will forsake you." That's exactly the way it is today. The Lord is with you when you're with Him.

Now, how do you know when you are with the Lord? There is only one way. You know the doctrines of Scripture. You know what the mind of God is. You know what you think, and how it matches up to what he thinks, and how God does things, and how it matches up to what people around you are doing.

2 Chronicles 15:3 – this should make you weep: "And for many days, Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without Law." Israel was on a slippery slope down into paganism. Why? They were without contact with the true God. They were in great contact with all the pagan gods around them, and all their sinful ways of worshiping those pagan gods. They were in this condition because they didn't have a teaching priest. Consequently, they were without the knowledge of the Law of God. And they only had half of what we have. They didn't have the full revelation. But what they had, they needed to know, if they were going to be able to walk with integrity before God.

2 Chronicles 15:4-7: "But in their distress, they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and they sought Him, and He let them find Him. And in those days, there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in. For many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the land. And the nation was crushed by nation, city by city, for God troubled them with every kind of distress. But you," Azariah says to Asa, "You be strong. Do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work." Azariah was saying, "Asa, things are bad. The country is in a bad state. And you are getting beaten up upon by the religious community, because you're destroying the high places of worship. You're rubbing out the remnants of paganism, and you're going for the Word of God, and you're going for the priests who are preaching the Word." And he says, "Don't lose courage. When people walk away from you, don't lose courage. There is great reward for your work, because, in time, the Word of God will not come back void. It will bear its fruit.

And this is very hard to do when all the other churches are having the hoopla, and the success, and carrying on in every way under the sun except the way the Word of God tells them to conduct themselves. And it is very sad to see Christians who say, "I won't attend a church that preaches the sound doctrines of Scripture. I want something else." What do they want? Something that appeals to theirs sin nature. And all they have to do is turn the television on, and they have it. It's full of the religious leaders who are making it where the people want to be scratched with their itching ears.

One more, in 2 Timothy 2:2. The apostle Paul says this, "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." This is the verse upon which Dallas Theological Seminary has been founded, and upon which it functions. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, a significant evangelist in the times of Moody and Billy Sunday and all those men, talked to pastors in whose churches he was conducting evangelistic meetings, and asked them: "What did the seminary training that you had fail to give you?" And he said, after 14 years as a traveling evangelist, I finally became appalled that, almost universally, they said, "They didn't teach me the Bible. So, finally they gave me my diploma, and I stood up there. I didn't know how to find out what was in the Bible from the Greek and Hebrew. I didn't know how to work my way through the systematic theology that was the framework of interpreting Scripture, because they didn't expect me to do that. They expected me to stand up and give little cutesy-pooh sermons to little cutesy-pooh Christians, so that I could get somebody to walk down an aisle, supposedly to be saved." And usually they said, "I'm not even sure I'm preaching the gospel right, so that they really are saved.

That's exactly what's happening today. So, Dr. Chafer said, I finally became so overwhelmed by this that I went to the Lord and said, "There needs to be a school, and it needs to be based upon 2 Timothy 2:2: 'The things that you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust also the faithful men who will be able to teach others also.' And those men must be trained in the Word of God, so that they can teach each other also." He got two or three other Christian men. They were businessmen. They met together in a hotel room in Atlanta, Georgia, and together they spoke, and prayed and thought, and spoke, and prayed, and hashed out this problem. And out of that meeting was born Dallas Theological Seminary with its concept of training men to be expository preachers. Dr. Chafer said the problem with churches is that there's nobody up in the pulpit explaining the Bible. And the reason they're not explaining the Bible is because they're going to seminaries that don't train him to do that.

He was right on target. And look what God has done worldwide with that one institution, and churches which are lucky enough, by the grace of God, to have a graduate of that institution. The church of which we are a part in this age is a product of the grace of God who created a body of believers uniquely related to Jesus Christ. We have seen that that analogy has been presented in several forms. One is that Christ is the Shepherd, and we Christians are the sheep. This is a very close relationship. Christ is the Vine, and we Christians share the life in as branches in Him. Christ is the Chief Cornerstone, and we Christians are living stones built upon him as the temple of God. Christ is the High Priest, and we Christians are the priests of the church age.

**Christ is the Head, and Christians are the Body**

Then we began this morning in Ephesians 4:11-16, where the figure is presented where Christ is the Head and Christians are the body. This is what Paul was referring to in Colossians 1:18. Israel was an organization – a theocratic nation. The church is a living organism. It does have an organizational expression in a local church, but it is based upon being an organism which is related to Christ, Who is the head of that organism, which is the body of Christ.

The passage in Ephesians 4:11-16 pointed out that the church is a self-developing body. Upon instruction in the Word of God, the Christians will be able to go out and do the work of the ministry because they are so equipped with the Word of God, and thereby, they're able to build up the body of Christ. The average church, with its smoke and mirrors, never builds up the body of Christ. They build up the local organization, but they don't build up the organism, the body of Christ. And that is why some people have a great antagonism.

I've had men tell me there is no such thing as the universal church. There is no such thing as the invisible body of Christ. There's only the local organization. And the reason they say that is because they know that what they're doing is building organization, but it is not bringing people into the body of Christ as saved believers who are then trained to bring others in as well.

Christians, therefore, have a service to perform in building up the body of Christ. This is done through instructing people in the Word of God. It is your job to bring people into salvation. It is your job then to point them into a local church ministry where they will learn the full counsel of the Word of God. And they'll be able to build a spiritual maturity structure in their soul. Christians are equipped to be able to do this by the pastor-teacher who explains the doctrines of the Word to them, and he leads that local church organization. That is the business of the local church.

Now, it's okay with me if you want to have some other kind of local church operation that appeals to you, and that makes your itching ears feel good. All I have to do is alert you to the way it is in the Word of God. And if you want to waste your life with that kind of a structure, that's fine.

I've observed an interesting phenomenon that takes place sometimes. We have people who, for one reason or another, no longer attend Berean Church. They move someplace; it's not convenient to come; or, something of that nature. Then they start feeling around for their lifeline to God, and they find: "This is hard." They go to this place and this place. They go to the biggest churches: "Man, these people have money. They have people. They have chairs with cushions on them, and they're very comfortable. They even have air conditioning. But they don't have the Word of God. And they begin to sense a great thirst in their lives that cannot be filled. Pretty soon, they begin to find themselves victims of their sin nature. And they say, "What is going on here?" And they roam from place to place.

Finally, I've noticed an interesting development – that often, these people say, "We're going to start our own Bible class. If they're off in some distant place up in Alaska, they'll grab our tapes, and they'll get a tape recorder, and they'll gather a congregation in that town, and they'll sit there, and they'll listen to what you've listened to here. Others will bring in some seminary student as a Bible teacher, and they set up a Bible class to learn the Word of God. That is certainly better than nothing. But home Bible classes are not going to cut it for you. They're better than nothing. There is no substitute for the local church ministry, under the teaching authority of the pastor-teacher gift that has been given to that local church, and which the church has recognized, and then place that pastor in that authority.

Where does his authority come from? How is it maintained? It is because he teaches the Word of God. People come to church, and they find that they are able to develop in the mind of God. They know exactly what book of the Bible to open to; they know where the Scripture is going to move; they know what the topic is; and, they know how the development is going to go forward, and they can nurse their souls on that, because that is God's way.

Whenever groups start coming with Bible classes of their own, I'm very, very uneasy. It tells me that they're longing sometimes for something they should not have left. And they have a longing in their soul for the mind of Christ, and they can't find it. So, they try to substitute for it. But in the local church, when Christians are trained, and equipped for their service, for the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12), then it is clear that every church member has a service in the local church ministry.

This is indicated to us in some classic Scriptures – 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, for example. What we are told in this Scripture is that, at a certain point in time, no doubt at the point in time of your spiritual birth at salvation, God has given you a spiritual gift – the Bible calls it. This is a spiritual ability with which to serve Him. And He gives you the gift that you need for your mission. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit (the Holy Spirit). There are varieties of ministry, but the same Lord Jesus. There are varieties of effects, but the same God the Father Who works all things in all persons."

Now, in those three verses, you can see that your Christian service, and your abilities that you receive at the point of salvation, have been provided for you by God the Holy Spirit; God the Son; and, God the Father. All three were involved in setting you up for your life mission. Now that gets to be pretty serious business. And that alone should make you pause and say, "I cannot blow this by letting myself drift off in smoke-and-mirror church operations that appeal to my sin nature. And young people are particularly prone to that, because they're immature. They're inexperienced. And it looks like hoopla is where it's at with God.

I'm coming down hard on this because you, and those who hear this after you, need to be prevented from making those stupid moves in life that put those huge scars on a person, and get them locked into relationships that they can't walk off with biblically, and now they're in misery. How did it happen? Because they didn't know the Word of God, or when they knew it, they turned their back upon it. They did not consistently follow the techniques of the Christian life. There's a whole set of tapes up there in the tape room on the techniques of the Christian life. How many Christians know those techniques? If you don't know them, you're not going to live the maximum life for God's service and your eternal blessing. So, God the Father; God the Son; and, God the Holy Spirit come together and say, "You're in My family now. You're a person of royalty, and I am now trusting you with this spiritual ability. You didn't have it before, but now you've got it. These are not natural abilities. These are something totally different.”

1 Corinthians 12:7-8: "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good, for edifying others." And here are some of the kinds of abilities He gives: "For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit. And to another, the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit." These two gifts no longer exist. These were pre-New Testament Bible completion gifts. Now the charismatics; the Assembly of God gang; the holy rollers; and, the Pentecostals – they love to say, "God gave me a word of knowledge," which means that: "God revealed something to me, and now I'm going to make a declaration to you. A word of knowledge – that was the devil you heard saying that. Don't tell them that. I don't want them to know that. I want them to walk around pretending that they're getting new Bible material. Just tell one of these yokels, "If God is giving you direct information, you should write it down. It's a revelation. You can make an addendum to the Bible. Zondervan will publish it. Now that they've been blown out of the water, and they can't change the NIV into a gender-neutral Bible, they need something else to sell. Save the stuff." After all, that's how Mohammad did. He got these revelations. His wife said, "Sweetie pie, when you're down there at the camel lot, selling the animals, write these things down when they come to you. And he did. And it became the Quran. And it's one of the good sellers. It's not a best-seller, but a good one.

To each is given a spiritual gift. The word of wisdom through the Spirit was such that Christians in the New Testament church had to have insights on what was the mind of God relative to Christianity, which was brand new. They didn't have the Bible yet written to guide them in the New Testament. The word of knowledge was information that pertained to church age doctrine. They didn't have this until all these epistles were brought together. Christians in local churches had to depend upon the Spirit of God saying, "Here's the information. Now Paul is in prison. He's writing this. You'll get it later in written form, but right now you need to know this about the church, and you need to know this. Those gifts no longer exist.

These do still exist: "To another, faith, by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit." This no longer exist. The healing by God exists, but there's nobody who can go and lay a hand on somebody and heal that person. That gift is no longer operational. It was only there to prove to the Jews that Christianity was true. And these supernatural gifts of healing were given to them so that people said, "Whoa, this is God speaking. These people are the people of God."

"To another, the affecting of miracles." Nobody performs miracles anymore. You cannot go and perform a miracle of some kind that goes against natural laws. You can lie about it. You can pretend that it's happening, but it isn't happening

"And to another, prophecy." There's no more telling the future. There's no more prophetic utterances being made. And when anybody tries it, he proves to be a fool: "And to another, the distinguishing of spirits" (discerning of spirits), whether it is of God or not, that's operational: "To another, various kinds of tongues. There is nobody speaking in foreign languages that you don't know. And you can go ahead and pretend to do that. You can say that you are. You can go ahead and listen to an assembly of charismatic Pentecostals, like Bob Tilton, babbling nonsense, and telling you that that's speaking in tongue. Fine – if you want to believe that, go ahead. But take a handkerchief to heaven with you. Be sure they put it in your casket, so that you can be up there at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and you can start wiping the tears off your eyes until Jesus comes and says, "You were a fool. But I want you to know that all is well now." And the justice that will overwhelm your heart will say, "Yes, I was a fool. I listened to those preachers. I listened to their subjectivity. I didn't realize that only what's in the objective statements of Scripture can protect me from Satan's delusions."

Nobody speaks in foreign languages today, because those gifts were not needed. They were cut off, as 1 Corinthians 7 declares, because the job of authenticating Christianity was finished: "And to another, the interpretation of tongues." You had to have that in the early language. Some guy could get up there and spout off, and pretend to be speaking in a language, and you don't know unless somebody gets up and interprets what he said. And someone says, "Yeah, that's German." You had to have someone who had the ability to interpret, in order to confirm that the guy wasn't lying to you.

A Dallas Theological Seminary student one time went to a Pentecostal meeting. And he stood up, and he went off into babbling. And sure enough, somebody stood up in the audience and translated what he said. And when he got up and said, "Folks, I deceived you. I was just making that up. It doesn't mean a thing." Did that change their minds? No. Like Pat Boone said one time on television, after he and one of the leaders of the charismatic delusion were talking. He said, "Isn't it wonderful, that you and I have something more than a doctrine to guide our lives." What were they talking about? The same thing that woman this morning was talking about: what her spirit inside was telling her. The spirit she was talking about is called the sin nature. And Boone thought he was so smug and so confident to take a swap at the people who were teaching the doctrines of Scripture, and saying, "That's where it's at." But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually, just as He wills.

And here's another one of those summaries through which is indicated that we Christians all have a part in the ministry of the local church. Romans 12:3-8: "For through the grace given to me, I say to every man among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body, and all the members do not have the same function (speaking about the analogy of the physical body – comparing it to the body of Christ), so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts, spiritual abilities, that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly. If prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith. If service or ministry (that gift exists), in his serving. Or he who teaches, in his teaching. Or he who exhorts, in his exhortation. He who gives, with liberality. He who leads, with diligence. And he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

Each part of the human body has a specific function. So too, in the body of Christ, each of us has a specific function. We have our mission. And at the end of life, you should be able to say with the apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have run the course. I have fulfilled my mission. I've kept the faith." This faith that Paul speaks, in his spiritual ability, is the commission that was given to him.

The other day, as I was driving, cars came in the opposite lane, and their lights were all on. And I was impressed by how long the line was. The lights were on in car after car after car. And I thought, "This must be some person of some significance. A lot of people have come out for his funeral." And it made a very dramatic display. But I could not help also thinking: "I wonder how things are with him and God. And if he's a Christian, I wonder how much fame and fortune he's going to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, in terms of fulfilling his mission with the spiritual abilities that were his as a Christian." He's going out in a blaze of glory, obviously. Squad cars were leaping over one another. They had to have a squad car in the middle, and a squad car at the end, and a squad car at the front. And they're jumping back and forth to clear the traffic. He went out in a real blaze of glory. But did he enter glory in great rejoicing, or is he reaching for his handkerchief?

These gifts, which we have been referring to, are given for our Christian service in the body of Christ. He is the head, and we are the body. And each of us is in full-time Christian service. 1 Corinthians 12:11 says, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually, just as he wills."

I was in Costa Mesa, California several years ago, when we used to run our tapers' conferences there. There was a great temple there (Calvary Temple). It's still there – a very famous charismatic Pentecostal operation. I went to the Friday night meeting, which is the jumpin' and jivin' meeting, where all the fun is – the speaking in tongues, and getting peoples slain in the Spirit. I like to see those. I just love to see those when they go boom! And this guy falls over, and the ladies fall over, and then they rush in with the little cloth to cover up their legs so that they don't look too bad. And this man got up and said, "Folks, I'm a medical doctor." And he said, "I'm now an intern." And he said, "I have prayed to God to give me the gift of healing." I don't know why he'd ask that. He's not going to make much money doing that. He can run himself out of business very quickly if he can just heal people. It's kind of squeamish to charge people for a spiritual gift ministry.

Anyhow, he said, "I asked God." And I thought to myself, "But that's not what the Bible says. The Bible says that the Spirit distributes to each one individually as He wills." He can't pray for a spiritual gift. He can't ask for one of these gifts to be given to you. But he said, I prayed for this, and then God gave me the gift." But he said, "The first three times I used it, the person I used it on died." And he said, "At first I was discouraged. And then I thought to myself, 'No, this is the finest thing that God could do. When they die, they're completely healed.'" He said, "I did have the gift." And I'm sitting there. And sitting next to me was this blond lady that was there. And I can't believe what I'm hearing: "These three people showed me (and confirmed) that I had the gift of healing. The finest expression of the gift of healing was that they died. And now they've been made completely whole."

That's how you can con yourself. When you're out of doctrine, you're out of sense. The truth of the matter is that the finest expression of the gift of healing, and the one that accompanied the gift of healing, was when you could raise somebody from the dead. So, you may see Oral Roberts come up and tell about healing services, or his son tells you about the services of healing that he performs in these great places. They have these pictures of vast numbers of people, and they're all swinging and swaying with Danny Kaye and his Royal Canadians. And here they are supposedly healing people. But the truth of the matter is that it is entirely a con game. They're not healing anybody. And if they did, they would raise people from the dead. When you get somebody like that, say, "Please, confirm your gift of healing. I have a friend down here in the mortuary. The mortician doesn't like me to do this too much. It's really knocks his business, but he'll let me have a body for you to raise." They won't touch it with a 10-foot pole, any more than the healer will agree when you say, "Here, I have this person who has terminal cancer. I want to bring him in. We're going to have a church meeting. I'd like you to heal him." They won't touch it with a 10-foot pole. This is a con game.

How do you know? Because of doctrine. Don't fall into the trap of them trying to prove something by experience, and then you, because they can't heal, you know that that's not true. That's not the reason you know it's not true. It'll confirm it, but you know it's not true because of what Scripture says of the orderly use and purpose of God in these particular spiritual gifts.

**The Active Spiritual Gifts**

1 Corinthians 12:18 also says, "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body just as He desired." You can't pray for a spiritual gift. God determines what you're going to get, but you need to know what it is. There are nine of them:

1. **Evangelism**

You may have the gift of the evangelist.

1. **Pastor-Teacher**

You may have the gift of the pastor-teacher. Those are the two primary communicator gifts.

1. **Exhortation**

You may have the gift of exhortation. Some of you have the ability to stand up and to commend people for what they do, and to exhort them to a vision for God, and everybody listens, and everybody's heart is moved. You may exhort them to an achievement; to a righteousness; or, to a position. When you speak, they all hush and listen.

1. **Ministering**

There's the gift of ministering. This is the gift of serving. It is my personal opinion that, under the gift of ministry, all of your natural gifts are used. You have an ability of music? Here's where God uses it, under the gift of ministry. You have an ability in mechanical ways? The gift of ministry is where you use that mechanical ability. So, with the gift of ministry, all of your natural abilities that you're born with are covered in the use of God so that they're put to a sacred use, and that is a great gift. I also think that every Christian has the gift of ministry.

1. **Administration**

There's the gift of administration. These are people who have the ability to be able to lead organizational structures. They're able to be leaders of groups within the local church. They're able to administer an area of God's vineyard.

1. **Giving**

Then there's the gift of giving. This is not what every Christian has: a duty of giving. This is big-time giving. You have to have money available to give. And pity the local church that doesn't have at least one person with the gift of giving. Its hands will be greatly restricted and tied. The gift of giving is God prospering you so that you are free to give large sums of money to His work. And when you understand that, you're very happy to do it. Even if somebody tries to squelch you, you know that those treasures are going to await you in heaven. And I'm always humbled, and I'm always pleased when somebody comes up, and they give a very significant gift to the Berean ministries, and they're so delighted to do it, and they say, "I'm storing my treasures in heaven." How wise and how significant it is to be able to have the gift and to use it. There are Christians who have these gifts, and they don't use them. That's one of the most prominent.

1. **Mercy**

There's the showing of mercy. This is the capacity of tenderness that some people have. Some have a great sensitivity. Most people, when somebody does something wrong, they want to sock it to you. Others, when you've played the stupid role, they have that merciful quality such that they want to come up, and give you a tender hand, to help you get straightened out, and get you on the track. They don't give you what you deserve. That doesn't come naturally. That's a special gift from God.

1. **Teaching**

Then there's a gift of teaching. This is very much different than school teaching. This is teaching of spiritual phenomena, and some of you have that gift. That's why you're Sunday school teachers. That's why you're club leaders. That's why you're in the capacity of Training Union directors; beginner church; and, primary church. You are teachers. That is your ability. That is your calling.

1. **Faith**

And then there is the gift of faith. Some people are able really to go by faith. And because they can do it, they lead all the rest of us to follow them. They inspire us to have faith in God to do the unthinkable, and to do that which we didn't think we could possibly do. On an organizational level, they fire us up with the confidence that God is leading us to do something, and because of your closeness to Him and walking to Him, you have the great gift of faith.

Now, for some people, the quality of faith is frightening. You all know of George Mueller and his orphanages in England. He was a man of faith. Man, I wouldn't even want to think about being that kind of a person of faith. But the reason he was able to do that is because he had this gift. Here's a man who had all these children to feed. On one occasion, there was no food. They were out of it. Breakfast came. The attendants that helped him in the orphanage, said, "Pastor Mueller, what will we do? There is nothing with which to feed the children." He said, "Get them washed up; get them dressed; and, get the table set. That's what you will do, so that we are ready when the food arrives.

He had no advance information, but he had the confidence that God was not going to let those kids starve, because He had told him to take care of these children, and make this provision. And sure enough, about breakfast time, they're all ready to be seated. There is a knock on the door, and the local grocer has a variety of food that he has left over, that he wants to dispose of, and other things that he brings in, so that there was a lavish breakfast for everyone. I would not like to be called upon to live like that. That is a faith that I'm not sure I'm up to. But if God gives you that ability, you'll be up to it, and you'll blow people out of the water with your confidence.

Every member is necessary in the body of Christ. And because you exercise your spiritual gift (whatever you have), you'll be equally rewarded as you are loyal to your own mission. Please remember that the learning of doctrine and the techniques of the Christian life that God operates, that is not Christian service. You're not rewarded for that. That is training to do the job that we looked at in Ephesians 4:11-12. But you can't do that training if your pastor-teacher isn't acting as the drill instructor to carry you through, and to pace you through that training.

A believer in the body expresses the use of his spiritual gift overtly through the local church ministries, and his daily personal contacts. The body of Christ is one organization (Ephesians 1:23, Ephesians 2:15-16, Ephesians 3:6, Ephesians 4:12-16). All those make it clear that there are no racial or social distinctions in the church. No carnality of believers can destroy this unity of the body of Christ in the organism. Carnality of believers brings very much destruction and disruption in the local church.

Christ, as the Head, directs the body in the acts of service. The Lord uses those who are willing to serve Him. That's the normal way to live. May God help us to appreciate this wonderful relationship: Christ our Head; and, we His body.

Dear God, our Father, we thank You for this evening, and we pray that it will be a memorable one for all eternity, as we have been alerted to truth. Now the devil is going to try to tell us: "No, no, no. Be negative. Don't accept what the Word of God is."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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