***The Gifts of Ministry, and Teaching, and Pastor-Teacher
RO154-02***

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We are studying Romans 12:3-8. Our subject is "Service of the Body," and this is segment number four.

**Spiritual Gifts**

The main characteristic of the old sin nature in human beings is arrogance. Arrogance in the carnal Christian causes him to have a distorted view of his place in the body of Christ. Paul, as an apostle, speaks to us here in Romans 12 to direct us not to credit ourselves with roles and positions in the local church ministry for which we do not have spiritual gifts, and which do not justify our assuming such places of service. We Christians are always tempted, because of the sin nature in us, to be drawn to what we consider the glamor roles and the glamor spots among God's people. It's a temptation to be in those positions, because they are only glamorous in man's eyes. They are not glamorous in God's eyes. Every Christian, Paul says is, in fact, rather to see what his spiritual gift is in the context of the faith that God has given him to execute it, and then to proceed to do so.

There is another passage of Scripture that Paul has written that reiterates the same idea that he is presenting to us here in Romans 12:4-5. That is in the letter to the Corinthians church. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 gives us a background in a little more detail of the kind of thing that he's trying to teach us in this passage in Romans 12. In 1 Corinthians 12:12, Paul says, "For as the body (referring to the human body) is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." At the point of our salvation, we have all been baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ. We have been made to drink of that Spirit; that is, He has come to indwell us. Incidentally, that relationship to the Holy Spirit puts us all on an equal plane.

From that point on, we differ. Verse 14: "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, 'Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, 'Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now God has set the members, every one of them, in the body as it has pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now, they are many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, 'I have no need of you.' Nor again the head to the feet. 'I have no need of you. Nay, much more, those members of the body would seem to be more feeble are necessary. And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor, and our commonly parts had more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need, but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or, one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the members of Christ, and members in particular."

So, Paul uses this illustration of the human body once more to press home the fact that God the Holy Spirit puts together a local church congregations. He puts it together on the basis of various spiritual gifts that individuals have, and he brings them, and puts them into that congregation for that purpose. There is no gift which is inferior, and everybody has at least one. He puts us in the position that we are to be. He tells us whether you're a mouth. He tells us whether you're the eye. He tells us whether you're the nose. He tells us whether you're a foot. He tells us whether you're a head. And Paul's analogy is self-evident – that if some part of the human body decided that it didn't like its function, and it wasn't going to work, that would be to the detriment of the whole body. That's what curses us in the local church ministries today. Christians say, "Hey, I can't do what I want to do, I can't be what I want to be in that structure." So, they cut out, and they go with their own, someplace else, where they think they will do better.

However, when you cut off a piece of your body, it dies. And in the Christian realm, when God puts you in the local church, and you cut yourself off, your physical body keeps breathing (until you check out your days), but you die spiritually. You cannot keep going in the wrong church when you pull yourself out of the right body.

So, this suddenly becomes a very serious piece of Scripture, which many Christians have learned, to their great sorrow: some, here; and, all of them on the other side. The analogy stresses the importance of every believer in the body of Christ doing God's work with his spiritual gift in the body where God has placed him. Each member is important for the life and the functioning of that body. United they stand; and, divided they fall.

So, in the body of Christ, there is no grounds for contempt for anybody's gift. There is no ground for jealousy toward any other member part. Any non-functioning spiritual gift in the local church congregation does not only cause that gift to be lost by that individual believer. A person can have a gift that is non-functioning, and that also happens very regularly – people who just are absent without leave from their point of service and duty. When you are non-functioning, it's not only that you lose out, but all the rest of us do too. You cannot have an arm that doesn't work on your physical body without all of you, as a person, being the poorer for it.

Now, the nature and the use of spiritual gifts in the local church congregation causes a lot of confusion on the part of Christians who don't understand the doctrine of spiritual gifts, and how they work. The Bible tells us very clearly that only God determines how these gifts work, and therefore, we have to go to Scripture to determine what God's plan is; how many gifts He has; and, what they are. Are they all working now? If not, which are in operation now, and why are some not operating now? You can only learn that from the Bible. You cannot do that by your subjective experience. What our experiences are can only be validated as being true or false, and can only be interpreted in the light of the Bible. The shifting sands of our personal experiences can never arrive on the solid ground of what is spiritually the truth.

Now, the charismatic movement has done us enormous injury as Christians, in the day in which we live, because they have added to what the Bible teaches about spiritual gifts. They have added their own myths. And they have done this to satisfy various desires of the sin nature, and their yen for experiential ecstatics. Unfortunately, today, the news media have created the fundamental mistake of equating Christianity with the charismatic movement. You can hardly ever see on television today the phrase "fundamental Christian" being illustrated except by some congregation with a bunch of idiots acting like fools with their hands waving over their heads, and their eyeballs rolling up into their heads. And all across America, Satan has job a wonderful thing of equating that with what the Bible teaches as God's people. And they're as much God's people as some pagan in the heart of Africa. And it's a serious matter.

Christians who have fallen into that trap of judging doctrine by their experiences are going to have all eternity to regret it. And some of you who are wise enough to say, "Wait a minute. First we must see what God says, and then we will know what God thinks, and what God is doing." And then we can look at our experience and say, "My experience is valid; or, it is a deception of Satan." Those of you who are judging your experiences by the Word of God, you're going to come out on top, and you are going to be proven right on the other side in eternity.

In John 12:48-49, Jesus says, "He that rejects Me and receives not My words have One that judges him. The Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken from myself, but the Father who sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." Therefore, to counter and to ignore the Scriptures is to ignore the very Word of God. And Jesus says, "You can go ahead and do it. Sure, you have freedom to do anything you want to do as a Christian, but you are going to be judged by what the Word of God has declared. If you want to ignore it, that's fine. You're free to do it. But be prepared to have to face it someday.

On the other side, from spiritual gifts, all of us recognize that we have a room full of people here who have a lot of natural abilities. And we've had some of those demonstrated today. Natural abilities are the result of your genetic heritage. Spiritual gifts are the result of a gift from God the Holy Spirit, sovereignly bestowed upon you at the point of your salvation. Just as you had nothing to do with the genetic structure of your body, and of the natural gifts that flow from that genetic structure, so you have nothing to do with the spiritual gift you have. As in the physical realm, it is smart to decide what you have a knack for doing – what natural abilities and what natural capacities: what you're good at, and you make something out of those capacities; so, in the spiritual realm, God says that we are to discover what we have a knack for doing spiritually. That is our spiritual gift – our spiritual ability for service.

The apostle Paul, here in Romans 12, is warning us to be aware that those spiritual capacities do exist; that we do have at least one of these; and, that there are several of them, and that it is important that, when you serve God, you serve Him primarily through the capacity of that gift. There are many other responsibilities. There are duties that are upon all of us as Christians that have nothing to do with our spiritual gifts. There's a lifestyle. There is an attitude of heart, and an attitude of mind, and a treatment of one another. All of these things are within the realm of biblical Christianity, and of having a Christian character. We call that the fruit of the Spirit. These are qualities that God the Holy Spirit develops in all of us for our service and our relationship. But there is a certain area in which you have a capacity. You can use it; or, you can ignore it. But the Holy Spirit has given you an ability. He does not give these spiritual abilities to unbelievers. The Holy Spirit cannot grant spiritual gifts to anybody until they are in the body of Christ, and until they are born again.

**Pride**

Since all spiritual gifts are the sovereign gifts of God the Holy Spirit, there is no ground for pride. Yes, some of you have spiritual gifts that put you in the public eye all the time. And there are Christians who may think, "Wow, that's a favored position." It is not. It doesn't matter whether you are in the public eye, or if you are a Christian who is regularly serving the Lord in some ministry capacity you have, and nobody ever even thanks you. Nobody even lets you know that they're aware that you're doing it. There is no difference with God. The only difference is whether you execute or don't.

1 Corinthians 4:7: "Who makes you to differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now, if you did receive it, why do you glory as if you have not received it?" So, you have a certain capacity. But where did you get it? You got it from God – a special gift. So, what have you got to be proud about? What have you got to brag about? Nothing.

Compare that with 1 Peter 4:10-11: "As every man has received a gift, even so, minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." He's talking about having received a spiritual gift: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God gives; that God, in all things, may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to Whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

The point of our spiritual gifts is always to glorify God. We Christians are but a tool in the hand of God Who is the Craftsman. When a craftsman produces a beautiful product, and he accomplishes something that we stand in awe of, we do not praise his hammer. We do not praise his screwdriver. We do not praise his saw. So, we praise the craftsman who had the capacity to use the tool.

So, where do Christians get off with the big head, and with this arrogance, and with this pride that so easily filters in, relative to what we do in the body of Christ, and thinking we're something all that hot. The Bible says, "You're nothing. You're zilch. You're zero, except for the gift that God has given you." And what you do with it is because God the Holy Spirit will execute through you if you let Him, so you don't get any credit. It's nothing for you to take pride in. You do get credit for it. You do get rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ, providing it is done in a spirit of to the Lord's glory.

So, spiritual gifts must be used under the filling of the Holy Spirit if they are to produce the divine good works for which they were designed. Paul had one of those marvelous, supreme gifts that no longer exists – the gift of apostleship. And he was in supreme authority as a spiritual leader. He had this gift because he had seen Jesus Christ alive from the dead. He possessed the gift of apostleship, and it was confirmed to people by several supernatural signs: the signs of healing; the signs of miracles; and, the signs of tongues. There are no apostles today. There is no one alive who has seen Jesus Christ raised from the dead. Therefore, there is no one who can qualify for that. Anybody who says that he is an apostle is a false apostle.

We had a youngster in school on one occasion who came to the teacher and asked the teacher what an apostle is. And she explained what an apostle is, and explained that these people are no longer here with us. When they died off in the New Testament church, that was the end of it. It was a special kind of spiritual ability that God used to establish the church, and to give us the New Testament Scriptures. And the little girl said, "But my pastor says that he's an apostle." Now what do you say? How would you like to be in a Berean Academy classroom, and some kid comes and said, "Hey, my pastor that he's an apostle?" Well, you have to be as gentle as you can. But the pastor may be changing the meaning of the word, or he just may be arrogating to himself something that he does not understand. There are no apostles today.

Furthermore, Paul has pointed out in Romans 12 the gift of prophecy. This is another gift which no longer exists. It is a gift of the ability to receive direct revelation from God. It deals with current matters as a forth-teller of the mind of God. It dealt with future matters as a predictor of prophetic matters that are going to come in the future. It is a special ability that was given, 1 Corinthians 14:3 says, in order to bring edification; to bring exhortation; and, to console Christians in the early New Testament church until the New Testament Scriptures were written. We get our edification; our exhortation; and, our consolation from the Word of God – the New Testament Scriptures. Once the New Testament canon of Scripture was completed, the gift of prophecy ceased.

Now, I guess I better take a moment so that you are not an intimidated people when you hear the charismatics constantly claiming to give the word of prophecy. Some people go around saying, "The Lord told me this." Someone stands up and says, "God has just given me this prophecy to deliver to you." That's kind of scary. You might lean back and say, "Wow, is that really the case?" Is there such a thing as God speaking through somebody to you today? That is the question. That's the main use of the gift of prophecy.

Well, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 give us the answer very clearly: "Love never fails. But whether there be prophecies, and they should be done away." The Greek word looks like this: "katargeo." "Katargeo means "to render inoperative" or "to abolish." So, we have a clear statement in the Bible on a clear meaning of a Greek word that everybody knows – that it's going to be abolished. The tense here is future. At sometime in the future, prophecy is going to be abolished. It's passive. It's going to be done to prophecy by somebody. It's indicative – a statement of fact. Paul indicates that prophecy, which produced the New Testament information that composed the Scriptures, gave the early Christians piecemeal information from God, one piece at a time. It did not come all together.

In 1 Corinthians 13:9, notice that it says, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." The word "part" looks like this. It is the Greek word "meros." And what this indicates is piecemeal. So, Paul says in verse 9, we have piecemeal information from God today (when he was living, and when he was writing this). We have a prophet who tells us something here – a New Testament truth here. Another prophet gives us this New Testament truth. And here the apostle, who also has the gift of prophecy, he gives us a New Testament truth. We have it here; and, we have it there. God gives it to us as we need it. But it's all in pieces until He brings it together in the written New Testament Scriptures. But the time is going to come when God is going to bring that piecemeal information together. And the 27 books of the New Testament will be completed. Then you don't need prophecy anymore. You don't need any more little parts of information from God revealing truths about the church age.

**That which is Perfect**

So, notice in 1 Corinthians 13:10: "But when that which is perfect" (and he's just said, up in verse 9, that prophecy is going to be abolished. The question is: when? "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is piecemeal (in part – 'meros') is going to be done away with." The word "perfect" looks like this in the Greek Bible: "telios." It's an adjective which is here used as a noun. It means "the completed" or "the finished." It is in the neuter tense. Aha! Therefore, that tells us when the completed thing (not person, and not event, but when the completed thing) happens. Furthermore, it is singular. So, it's referring to one thing – something that is completed so that it no longer is in a piecemeal fashion. And then prophecy will be done away with.

**The Gift of Prophecy has Ended**

That completed thing, in the context of speaking about information from God, piecemeal in prophecy, connects right back to the New Testament Scripture. That is the completed thing. It is not the arrival of Jesus Christ at the Second Coming. That isn't when prophecy came to an end. Prophecy came to an end when the New Testament Scriptures were finished, and God stopped giving direct revelation to individuals. That has historically proven true. And the Scriptures are indicating that that is exactly when it is going to happen. When all the pieces of prophecy given, up to that time, were brought together in the New Testament, that thing will be completed, and therefore, the incomplete thing will be completed as the New Testament Bible. Therefore, at that point, prophecy will be done away with. It will no longer be needed for the guidance of the church. And the era of revelations directly from God through the prophetic gift will have come to an end.

So, it is very clear to us that anybody who claims to have the gift of prophecy today is a false prophet. Yes, that's an amazing statement. But whole denominations, like the charismatics, are filled with false prophets. Even as we sit here, people are standing up in their congregations and declaring that they have received today a prophecy from God. Unless you've been in that, that you will not fully appreciate it.

**The Gift of Ministry**

Paul all goes on in verse 7: "Or ministry. Let us wait on our ministry." Here's another spiritual gift. This is the gift of ministry. It looks like this: "diakonia." This is a very important gift. It's the gift of ministering, or the gift of serving. Pay good attention to this. I'm inclined to believe that every Christian possesses this gift. Whatever else he has, I think that every Christian has this gift. It refers to some kind of service which one performs as a helper to the people of God. It covers a wide spectrum of Christian service activities. The gift implies that one is a help to other believers through the local church ministry. This gift is more task-oriented than it is people oriented. When we get to the gift of mercy, that is people oriented. That is coming in to an individual who needs your merciful help that you have a particular capacity to give him in his misery. But when we talk about the gift of ministry, we're talking about the organization. People do benefit by it, but it's more performing a certain task.

Also, although I cannot demonstrate this from Scripture, I'm inclined to believe that it is true that this is the point at which our genetic abilities are sanctified by God, and used in His service. Those natural capacities that we have, in various ways, are brought under the gift of ministering. And God enables you to take that natural ability, and use it in a way that glorifies the Lord. You could also take that natural ability and indulge it entirely on yourself in a way that does not produce a task that accomplishes forward movement in God's work. But when God takes hold of it, that same ability is used to enable you to store treasures in heaven. And it's a natural gift being used under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

So, this gift, I say, is probably given to every Christian. It's a gift which, therefore, is under enormous attack by Satan in order to keep the local church work from being done. Satan's hindering of this gift is certainly clearly evidenced by how hard it is to get Christians who can do something to do it, and to keep Christians who have the capacity to do something, to keep doing it, and not get sidetracked off. Satan is always trying to keep all of you from executing that marvelous capacity you have that, in this particular congregation, you have been placed to perform in specific, exact way.

Don't forget that I'm speaking to those of you who are young people. How often indeed have I seen young people who are under the authority of adults who are disoriented to the Word of God; who do not understand doctrinal principles; who do not walk with the Lord; and, who make decisions, as indeed parents must make for their sons and their daughters, and they make decisions for those children that lead them out of God's work. They lead them away from using their particular gift for the Lord's glory. It is only until the youngster gets grown, or gets out into eternity, and looks back and realizes how much it cost him, and how much it cost her, when their parents made a decision for them relative to Christian service that they should have been doing in the gift of ministering at that point in their lives.

This gift is exercised within the local church under the consultation of the church leadership. It is not a gift which is open-range. Sometimes, we have Christians who want to exercise the gifts of ministry, and they move in and they start treating the local church operation like an open-range, and doing their own thing. And pretty soon, they do get into trouble and conflict, and they find that they cannot minister on their own turf. They must minister under the guidance of the confirming authority of the local church leadership. We as Christians are responsible to use this gift, and like with all of them, to use them for the Lord's glory. This is especially true when you bring some of these awesome gifts that people have as natural abilities, and you bring them under the ministering ability of the spiritual gifts and the sanctification of the Spirit of God to be used to accomplish work in the local ministry, it is impressive, and it is an area where you are very much tempted to get to be very proud of yourself because of what you can do and what you can accomplish.

So, I remind you of Ephesians 5:18 that says: "Be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit," meaning that what you do as a Christian should be under the controlling influence of God the Holy Spirit. When that is the case, then great and wonderful things are accomplished.

Notice Acts 4:31, concerning the early Christians who had just been placed under an attack or persecution: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." This is the same thing that Ephesians 5:18 has told us, as Christians, to be; namely, our known sins are confessed so that God the Holy Spirit can control and lead the life. And look at the result: "They spoke the Word of God with boldness." Where their lives were threatened, they had the capacity and the courage to stand up to the authorities and say, "We must obey God. We know that Jesus is alive. He is the Messiah, and we will proclaim Him.

Add to that 1 Corinthians 10:31, the overall guideline: "Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." So, the gift ministering, some of them very glamorous indeed as per your genetic abilities, are to be done to the Lord's glory. We indeed must appreciate the Christians among us who function on the gifts of ministering, and you should be careful not to let Satan bring you down, because I can assure you this is a top priority gift. Do not let him bring you down by keeping you from doing your gifts, or moving you away from your mission. That's one of the favorite ways of Satan to bring Christian downs – to take them away from where their true mission lies.

**The Gift of Teaching**

The next gift in Romans 12:7 is the gift of teaching. This word looks like this: "didasko." This refers to one who has a special, supernatural ability to explain the Bible. This is the ability to explain and to convey understanding of spiritual truths. It is the exposition of doctrine. The capacity to teach means that you can explain. The Greek word for "to explain" looks like this: "diermeneuo." This is the very word which was used to explain what Jesus did when he met the two men on the road to Emmaus, so discouraged because they thought that Jesus was the Messiah, and here He was dead, and it was all over. Jesus says, "Oh, you foolish men. Don't you understand that that's the way it was going to go? Don't you understand from Scripture that that's what had to happen to the Messiah?" And then the Bible says, "Jesus 'diermeneuo' to them from Moses and the prophets. He became their Teacher, and He explained from Scripture the doctrine they didn't understand. And suddenly, everything fell into focus for them. Jesus had the ability to teach. And this is what we're talking about here.

Paul says, "Those of you with the ability to teach, get on with your teaching". The word for "teaching" looks like this. It's a related word: "didaskalia." And that means "doctrine." That is the word that we get for Bible doctrine. Those of you who have the ability to teach, Paul says, "Get on with your doctrine. Get on with your teaching ministry." This obviously is one of the most important gifts in the church-age, now that we no longer have any apostles or prophets on the scene. These men were the foundation of building the church, and upon which the church was built. But they're gone now.

In 1 Corinthians 12:28, you have a listing of these spiritual gifts upon which the church has been structured. Paul says, "And God have set some in the church: first apostles." They're gone: "Second prophets." They're gone: "Third, teachers." Those we have. So, we're down to the teachers as the people upon whose shoulders now rests the carrying forward of the work of the Lord. This, of course, does not make the possessor of this particular gift superior in the body of Christ. He is but a tool, while God is the Craftsman. But it does make this possessor carry an enormous weight of responsibility.

For this reason, James 3:1 has this to say to people who teach in the local church ministry: "My brethren, be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment." James says, "Don't be running out of your way to be a teacher unless you have the gift." You might think it's glamorous because you stand up there in front of people, and their eyes are on you, and their ears are tuned you, and you're saying things that they're paying attention to, and it affect their lives. That seem very glamorous. James includes himself: "Knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment." James says, "That is a very hazardous gift to have to have. And if you have it, you must exercise it. But it's hazardous because if you misinterpret the Word of God; if you mislead the people of God; and, if you bring discredit to the cause of Christ by what you have taught, do you think you will get away with that? Do you think that you will not be judged for that? You can count on it." And the price you pay at the Judgment Seat of Christ, if you have done that to Christian, is going to be very serious.

These people who have run around wasting literally years and years of lives of sincere Christians in the charismatic movement who are reaching out for the truth, and they send them up a blind alley with their false teachings on healings, miracles, and tongues, and everything else that goes with it (the aesthetics and the experiences) – those people must always look back with regret and with sorrow to realize that those were years out in the wilderness that could have been years in the fruitful service of God's vineyard. The people (the preachers and the teachers) who are standing up and misdirecting those people are going to pay for that in their own personal loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And if they're not Christians, they're going to pay for it even worse in the lake of fire. It's a serious business to hurt somebody because you have misrepresented what God has to say in the Scriptures.

**The Gift of Pastor-Teacher**

This gift of teaching is not the same as the pastor-teacher. The pastor-teacher does have part of this gift (the teacher part), but he is also combined with the leadership responsibility of guiding the flock into the things of the Word of God. His primary job is to feed them. But he cannot lead them unless he is able to teach them. So, the pastor must be able to do this. 1 Peter 5:1-4 make the pastoral relationship to teaching very clear: "The elders (or the pastors) who are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the suffering of Christ." This is Peter speaking: "And also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." To the pastors, he says, "Feed the flock of God which is among you; taking the oversight of it, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre (not because of money – not because of the great wealth that you may accrue out of it), but of a ready mind," because you have been called with this gift to do it: "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherds, Jesus Christ, shall appear, you shall receive," and here is a special crown of honor, a medal of honor, restricted only to pastors: "Those who have done the job of feeding the flock properly shall receive a crown of glory that does not fade away in heaven." This is one of the four crowns. This one is, specifically, to those in the pastoral ministry who have executed the gift of teaching.

However, the gift of teaching is much wider than that. And all of you who teach are in the same boat of responsibility. The teacher, however, quite obviously is not to teach whatever pops into his head. Those of you who like to get up and teach it by winging it are going to be in deep trouble, because you are the people who are going to be misusing your gifts, and misdirecting your students. Even if you don't misdirect them, you have failed to feed them as you could. It is not easy to teach the Word of God. I can personally testify to that. It takes hours and hours of enormous, intensive researching and study on your part to verify the information; to understand what's there; to get the perspective; and, then to be sensitive that the Spirit of God can lead you to present it so people understand it, and people can apply it.

2 Timothy 2:15, therefore, tells us who teach: "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly providing the Word of Truth." You may have the gift of teaching, but you do not automatically have content for teaching. You have to get that from the Word of God. And if you try to wing it, you're going to substitute emotions. You're going to substitute cute stories. You're going to substitute challenges. And the people of God are going to go out entertained, but not enlightened. The apostle Paul was a student of the Word of God all his life. You may look up Acts 5:34. Compare that with Acts 22:3. These passages tell us that he studied under the greatest rabbi of the time, Gamaliel. Galatians 1:15-16 tell us about his study habits.

In 2 Timothy 4:13, here's a book that's being written. He knows it's the last book he'll write. He knows he's going to die. He knows he's going to be executed. And what does he ask them to do? He says, "Please bring my parchment and the books, and my cloak. I need my cloak, but especially bring the books." Here this guy is checking out, and he's a student to the end. 2 Timothy 4:13: "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when you come, bring with you, and the books, but especially the parchments – especially bring my study materials."

So, this gift is so important because it takes a newborn Christian from human viewpoint darkness in his mind to divine viewpoint enlightenment via the grace system of perception. This is what we have been told to do as a local church in the Great Commission. In Matthew 28, the Lord is leaving. He is telling His disciples, and we who follow them, what our business is during His absence. And in Matthew 28:19-20, we read: "Go you therefore and teach all nations" – teaching them what? First, the doctrine of the gospel. Then the full counsel of the Word of God: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things (the full counsel of the Word of God – bring them into salvation, and bring them into water baptism). Now teach them whatsoever I have commanded you know. And lo, I am with you always, even unto to the end of the age. Amen."

This is the duty of the teacher. And that's why this is a gift of prime importance in the local church ministry, because that is the objective of everything a local church is supposed to be. It is not the New Year's Eve parties. It is not the afterglow. It is not all the fellowship meetings of one kind or another. It is not all the campouts and the club meetings, and all these other vehicles, except that they contribute to conveying God's divine viewpoint into the minds of young people and adults. That is the business of the local church. All the other things that have been imposed upon churches are human viewpoint impositions. And there are people who have a misconception about a local church. If they can't come in there and find a great social life for their particular age group, and for their particular interests, then they're not interested. And those people are forever going to be shallow, little, insignificant people in the body of Christ.

The person who has discernment, first of all, says, "What can you feed me of the Word of God, so that I can move on to maturity, giving me the capacity to execute my spiritual gift with maximum results, because I want lots of rewards when I stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ."

In Ephesians 4:12-13, Paul indicates that God has made a provision for that to happen. He said in verse 11 that he gave evangelists and pastor-teachers. In verse 12, he says, "He gave them for the perfecting of the saints, to bring them the spiritual maturity, by equipping them with the Word, for the work of the ministry, so that they can exercise their spiritual gifts for divine good production; for the edifying of the body of Christ, so as to build up Christians in the faith, and to expand the Christian community."

What's the objective? Verse 13: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, in the body of sound true doctrine, and in the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the mature man, unto the measure of the stature and fullness of Christ." Why are we teaching? To try to bring people into the image of Jesus Christ. In all of our agencies, this is our objective. You came in here today. You bear upon you the image of Lord Jesus Christ. It has been our objective to send you out of here today looking more like Jesus Christ internally than when you came in, because you have come to an understanding of the Word of God.

**The Gift of Exhortation**

The gift of teaching is a very important gift. The next one that we do not have time to get into today is also a very important gift: the gift of exhortation. Verse 8 says, "For he that exhorts on exhortation. Exhortation is a gift to give guidance to people to do the right thing, and to do what they should be doing – just to do right, and to do it according to the principles of the Word of God. And we have seen in public demonstrations recently on the TV media, great discredit, and great humiliation being brought to the person of Jesus Christ, and to the cause of Christ, and to the Christian community, by preachers who have great public notoriety, but who are so detached from the Word of God, and who are such con-artists that they do not know how to deal even with their own sin. And they are conveying false ideas and false impressions both to the mass of Christians and to all that TV public who is eager to listen to the scandal.

Next Sunday, we're going to try to give you some perspective on what you've been seeing on television, which has been a corrupting violation and defacement of the gift of exhortation and the handling of personal sin.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1988

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