

Sermon Notes & References  
'Gifts of Ministry'  
Ephesians 4:7-16  
September 14, 2008

- A. Introduction:
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    - a. Foundational:
    - b. Propagational:
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  - 2. the 'why?' of ministry ..... 4:13-16
    - a. unity of ...
    - b. unity of ...
    - c. maturity ...
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    - e. with proper working of ...
- B. What is the How of Ministry?
- C. Who Gives Spiritual Gifts?
  - 1. .... 4:7
  - 2. .... 1 Corinthians 12:11
  - 3. .... James 1:17, 2 Timothy 1:6
- D. Who Receives Spiritual Gifts?
  - 1. the importance of the question (2 Corinthians 11:13-15) is ...

- 2. God works in our human nature (Jeremiah 1:5, Galatians 1:15, Romans 12:1) by ...
- 3. Spiritual gifts differ because (1 Corinthians 2:14) ...
- E. When Are Spiritual Gifts Given?
  - 1. to God's people? ..... 4:8-10<sup>A</sup>
  - 2. to individuals? (1 Timothy 4:14, 1 Corinthians 12:31) .... 4:7
- F. What Are Spiritual Gifts?
  - 1. There are at least 5 lists in Scripture, having different emphases:
    - a. Ephesians 4:7-16
    - b. Hebrews 2:3-4
    - c. 1 Corinthians 12:7-11
    - d. Romans 6:13
    - e. 1 Peter 4:9-11
  - 2. gifts of confirmation – signs and wonders (Mark 16:20)
    - a. healing gift and the norm (James 5:14-15, 1 Timothy 5:23, 2 Corinthians 12:7)
    - b. prophecy and tongues and the norm (1 Corinthians 13:8-10)
- G. How May I Know My Spiritual Gift?
  - 1. external means ...
  - 2. internal means ...
  - 3. Philippians 2:13

<sup>A</sup> Application of Psalm 68:18; see also Hebrews 1:3, John 14:17, 16:7

A. Introduction

1. our message last week was the ‘Philosophy of Ministry,’

- a. based on the same passage that we just read
- b. we looked at the ‘who?’ of ministry

- (A) *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping {perfecting, fulfilling} of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” (Ephesians 4:11-12 NKJV)*
- (B) *verse 11 describes Christ’s appointments in the church: “And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.” (1 Corinthians 12:28)*
- (C) *the first wave of appointees we had already read about in Ephesians 2: 19b-20: “...God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,” – so the apostles and prophets were foundational, and, the church of Christ having been founded, they have no successors today*
- (D) *the second wave of appointees were propagational: that the church of God might go forward: evangelists, and pastors and teachers.*
- (E) *the third wave of appointees are all the saints, every member of the body is to minister in this body building – we believe that Paul taught every-member ministry*

c. we looked at the ‘why?’ –aim, goal, purpose– of ministry

- (A) *the short-term or immediate goal of the appointees being that of preparing all saints for ministry*
- (B) *and the long-term or ultimate goal of ministry being found in verses 13–16, which we summarised as*
  - (1) *unity of the faith ... of the Son of God – as a local part of the family of God, walking in trust together with the family Head, Jesus Christ*
  - (2) *unity of ... the knowledge of the Son of God – the body of believers having personal, individual as well as a shared, corporate relationship with Him*
  - (3) *when collectively we become a ‘mature (or perfect) man’, a body suitable and befitting to the stature of Christ its head: equally applicable to the visible, local body as to the invisible,*

universal body

- (4) verses 14-15, **no longer children, tossed ... and carried** by false teaching ; a congregation that know the fundamentals of the faith and is alert to defend and **'speak the truth in love'**
- (5) verse 16: with **'the proper working of each individual part'** – each and every member – so the joints or joining together supplies what is needed for body growth – **'in love'!**

2. today we will consider this passage again

- a. to answer the question of the 'how?' of ministry
- b. How does God plan that ministry take place in the church?
- c. **May 1991; Wall Street Journal report that one of largest U.S. evangelical churches had held a wrestling match between church employees in one of their Sunday services. "To train for the event, ten game employees got lessons from Tugboat Taylor, a former professional wrestler, in pulling hair, kicking shins, and tossing bodies around without doing her harm." No physical harm to the staff members, perhaps, but what is the spiritual effect on the church itself of such an exhibition?**
- d. **How far will churches go to entertain? Another Wall Street Journal article in December 1990 profiled a large evangelical church in the Southwest that has taken the entertainment philosophy to an extreme. This church sent staff members to study live special effects at Bally's Casino in Las Vegas. Then they installed a half-million-dollar special-effects system in the main auditorium. Now they can produce smoke, fire, sparks, and laser lights to accent the key points in the pastor's messages.**<sup>-{2}</sup>
- e. How does God plan that ministry take place in the church?

3. What is the How of Ministry?

- a. the answer in this and other passages is that God's plan for ministry in the church to use the gifts of ministry: spiritual gifts are God's means to build a spiritual body
- b. now, on this subject of spiritual gifts
  - (A) there are many opinions amongst Christians
  - (B) do you remember those ultimate goals of ministry?
    - (1) **unity of the faith ... of the Son of God?**
    - (2) **unity of the knowledge ... of the Son of God?**
  - (C) so, on this subject we should be careful to search God's word in order to **'speak the truth in love'**

- (D) this means that we should form our interpretation, not on one passage in the Bible, but in the context of the whole counsel of God, the entire body of Scripture
  - (E) our own statement of faith is silent on the subject, but our Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches has made public statements which I believe to form a sound understanding of God's word on this subject
- c. yet though we may hold interpretations of Scripture which differ from other communions on this subject, we can still share in worship and prayer with them; since God has chosen to permit such diversity within His church

4. So, what is the How of Ministry? – God's spiritual gifts are.

B. Who Gives the Spiritual Gifts? . . . . . 4:7

1. "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (AV), or, 'Christ's gift'
  - a. the grace in this verse is charis, not charisma, but as we continue in the passage you will see that what is given by charis, is the charisma (or, in the plural, charismata)
  - b. so, the first truth about spiritual gifts is this
    - (A) they are not according to the recipient's deserts
    - (B) we cannot earn them
    - (C) we cannot buy them as Simon the sorcerer tried
    - (D) but they are given by the grace; by unmerited favour
  - c. the second truth is that spiritual gifts are given, as the NIV explains it, 'as Christ apportioned it' – the measure of the gift is according to the generosity of the giver
  - d. the third truth is that spiritual gifts are given, not to a chosen few, but 'unto every one of us'
  - e. the final truth is that in this passage, and this becomes clearer as we go through the passage, Jesus Christ is the source of the spiritual gifts given to believers.
2. but so is the Holy Spirit: in writing to the Corinthian church on this subject, Paul concludes the list there by saying, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills." (1 Corinthians 12:11)

3. and so, also, God the Father

- a. "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." (James 1:17)
- b. and so the Triune God is involved in providing the spiritual gifts so that the church may be built up, as Paul exhorts pastor Timothy, "For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." (2 Timothy 1:6)

C. Who Receives Spiritual Gifts?

1. now this is an important question

- a. for spiritual gifts can be faked; we must 'test the spirits'
- b. there are many charlatans who will claim their possession: "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, ..." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15a)
- c. we need to be alert to this warning

2. now, on the one hand, let us recognize that

- a. before we come to God in faith, the Lord is still sovereign
- b. God told Jeremiah, ""Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."" (Jeremiah 1:5)
- c. and Paul said, "But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased" (Galatians 1:15)
- d. but there is a sharp and distinctive difference between natural abilities and spiritual gifts
  - (A) abilities are God-given but not unique to believers
  - (B) they can be, and should be, given back to God: "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." (Romans 12:1)
  - (C) but though they can thus be used by God – my legs were given to me by God at my birth so that I can stand here in front of you – they are not spiritual gifts

3. as a consistent Calvinist, though, I cannot leave it there
  - a. when Paul says 'each one of us' the 'us' is limited this grace to those who are believers
  - b. before we come to Christ we are spiritually dead
  - c. "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." (1 Corinthians 2:14)
  - d. the natural man doesn't understand spiritual things
  - e. the spiritually dead cannot exercise spiritual gifts
  - f. spiritual gifts are only for spiritual people; for believers

#### D. When Are Spiritual Gifts Given?

1. now before answer that for individual, let us consider it in respect to the people of God – Paul continues ... (NKJV)
  - a. Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.' (Now this, 'He ascended' —what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)
  - b. the passage quoted, Psalm 68:18, praises Yahweh (Jehovah) as being the real power behind Messianic King David's storming and taking the stronghold of Zion
  - c. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, applies what was spoken of Yahweh to Jesus the Christ, the Messiah
    - (A) specifically, the humiliation of the Son of God in His incarnation, suffering and death
    - (B) and again, when Jesus had been raised from the dead, 'When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,' (Hebrews 1:3)
    - (C) after His ascension, then two things took place
      - (1) He sent His Spirit to indwell believers: in that last evening Jesus spoke to His disciples: "that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. ... But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." (John 14:17, 16:7) – do you see how that agrees?

(2) and, two, He 'gave gifts to men'

(D) in the OT, the Spirit of God could come upon men and women, even wicked men as Saul, but the Spirit's abiding presence and accompanying spiritual gifts did not take place until Christ's ascension, and Pentecost

2. when do believers receive spiritual gifts?

a. well, consider again Paul's words: 'But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.' (Ephesians 4:7) – the 'us' are believers, and at any instant, each one of us have been given a spiritual gift: whether we have been saved 50 seconds or 50 years

b. every believer receives spiritual gifts along with the Spirit

c. is that it; we get our gift and that's it? No consider this

(A) 'Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.' (1 Timothy 4:14) – cannot have taken place at conversion, for that would mean being saved by laying on of elders' hands

(B) 'But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.' (1 Corinthians 12:31) – suggests that God will give further gifts as needed

E. What Are Spiritual Gifts?

1. What Are the Spiritual Gifts? ... at least 5 lists (in handout)

a. Ephesians 4:7-16 – the appointee gifts of people

b. Hebrews 2:3b-4 – those particularly held by the apostles

c. 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 – both affirmation and ministration

d. Romans 12:6-13, 1 Peter 4:9-11 – basically ministration

2. confirmation gifts: as the people gifts, apostles, prophets, were foundational to the church, so their accompanying spiritual gifts were for the confirmation of the faith – as spoken of, eg., in Mark 16:20, 'And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.' – among these signs and wonders were

a. healings and miracles by the apostles: not the norm for the church as we find "Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with

oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him." – (James 5: 14-15) and, furthermore, that Paul, a healing miracle worker, did not heal Timothy of his stomach problems but prescribed conventional treatment, while he himself suffered illness, 'a thorn in the flesh' (1 Timothy, 5:23, 2 Corinthians 12:7)

- b. knowledge, or, the word of knowledge, of the prophets
- c. tongues, the speaking of the gospel in foreign languages to enable the preaching of the gospel
- d. again, not the norm for the church, for we read, "Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away." (1 Corinthians 13:8)
- e. these are not the norm for the authentication of the gospel is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the signs of wonders performed by Him and His followers; and, as well, God has give to us His complete, final, and authoritative revelation in the 66 books of the Scriptures – what can be added further now by tongues and prophecies? Nothing!

3. then there are the ministrations gifts, gifts for every age:

- a. these are gifts in which we serve one another; let me just recite them as taken from different translations of the lists:
  - (A) 1 Corinthians 12:7-11: word of wisdom, or, wise advice; faith; spiritual discernment; interpretation
  - (B) Romans 12:6-13: serving, teaching, liberal giving, diligent leading, showing mercy
  - (C) 1 Peter 4:9-11: hospitality, speaking, helping
- b. I may have missed some; not very spectacular, are they?– but necessary, in the wisdom of God, to bring us all 'to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God'
- c. are these all there are? – I think not – our Lord is a God of infinite variety and He will provide as the church has need

F. Conclusion: How Do I Know My Spiritual Gift?

- 1. I am afraid that I do not put much stock in the use of 'spiritual gift inventory or assessment' that have become popular – how did God ever manage before we had these psychological tests?



2. let me make some suggestions I have found helpful
  - a. the affirmation by mature, Spirit-led Christians of a gift which you have exercised {example, myself as teacher}
  - b. the burdening of your heart by the Holy Spirit for ministry {example, myself as pastor; these are not unique to me}
  - c. remember that "... it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."  
(Philippians 2: 13)

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
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2. “Bible Pattern: A Church Full of Ministers” by Rev John MacArthur, Sr – Kerux illustrations #3368