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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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An Introduction to Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:1-7

This morning, we begin an in-depth study of the doctrine of spiritual gifts... the basic idea that every single member of the Body of Christ has a special role to play in the growth of the church... a special role for which he or she has been specifically gifted by the Holy Spirit

The amazing grace of God... freedom from a wasted life! Not only does God in Christ forgive us of all our sins and give us an inheritance in heaven when we die, he also frees us from the emptiness of a wasted life

Unbelievers are wasting their time, energy, and talents on earthly goals that will all of them prove to be DUST IN THE WIND

Isaiah 40:6-8 "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. ⁷ The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."

Ecclesiastes 1:14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

But thanks be to God! He doesn't merely save us and tell us to get out of his way while he saves other sinners! He gives us vital works to do, and equips us to do them! Each one of you has an essential role to play in building up the church to full maturity in Christ

I. What Are Spiritual Gifts?

1 Corinthians 12:1 Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.

A. Greek word here: "spirituals"... that which has its origin in the Spirit

Other words:

1. Verse 4: Greek word *charisma* “gifts”... also Romans 12:6
2. Verse 5: “ministries”... Greek *diakonon*... services, or patterns of service
3. Verse 6: “activities”, “workings”, “effects”... Greek *energema*

B. Definition:

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by the Triune God to Christians to enable them to do specific spiritual ministries to build up the church of Jesus Christ.

SPECIAL ABILITIES given for SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

C. Paul’s Desire: that the Corinthians not be ignorant about spiritual gifts

1. The need for clear teaching of the Word on this
2. As we will see, the ministry of the Word primes the pump for all spiritual gift ministries in the church

D. Essential to God’s Saving Purpose for His People

1. Spiritual gifts are essential to the eternal plan of God for the completion of the church of Jesus Christ
2. From before the foundation of the world, God ordained that his elect would be saved from sin and brought into the perfect unity of the Body of Christ, eternally one with each other and with him in heaven
3. He ordained also that salvation should be a process... justification leading to sanctification leading to glorification; and that each Christian should have a vital role to play in their own salvation and the salvation of others
4. Spiritual gifts are given to each and every Christian... and the working of these gifts is essential to the conversion of the unconverted elect, and to the building up of the Body of Christ to full maturity
5. We all have a role to play...
6. Paul’s desire in writing these words centuries ago was that the Corinthian church would not be IGNORANT about spiritual gifts... it was essential that they understand these gifts properly and use them properly
7. He will be teaching them thoroughly for three chapters... through chapter 12, chapter 13, and chapter 14

8. It was the Holy Spirit's intention that Paul's letter to this one group of Christians in one city (Corinth) in the first century be preserved and included in the New Testament so that all Christians in every age would know the truth about spiritual gifts
9. My desire: that each of you members of FBC would understand the doctrine of spiritual gifts, be able to discern your own gifts, and then be moved powerfully by the Spirit to develop your gifts and use them for the rest of your lives
10. We don't want any "come, listen, and leave" members of our church... we want every single member of the church to have a clearly understood spiritual gift ministry that they do regularly for the overall growth and health of our church

E. Not Just One Gift... but a Gift Package

A "gift package": we are going to go through the gifts one by one over the next number of weeks and understand them carefully; but our spiritual gifts are more complex than that... I believe the Lord apportions a "gift package" to every Christian to enable him or her to do an array of tasks;

A painter's palette analogy... imagine a skillful Dutch master like Rembrandt, one of the greatest painters in the history of art; essential to that skill was the ability to mix paints and get the right hue for every square inch of the canvas

I had the privilege of looking at some of these incredible paintings at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam; the colors, even after all these centuries, are still vivid and powerful

So, Rembrandt as he would paint would have a palette of paint, with some basic colors dabbed on it; then he would mix three colors together in a specific proportion to get the right color for a young woman's ruddy cheeks; a different pallor for an old, sickly man's face; a different color for a shiny steel sword...

So it is with the spiritual gifts... the Holy Spirit takes the basic gifts such as hospitality, giving, helps, and exhortation and puts it in one woman or man and helps them use them in a unique proportion

For me, my calling is to be Senior Pastor of FBC Durham... that involves preaching on Sunday mornings, but also teaching in a variety of other settings, counseling (giving practical biblical advice to people facing various scenarios)... also leadership... casting a vision for the future, what direction our church should go

All of that is mixed on a pallet by the Holy Spirit in various proportions and painted into my soul

So it is with each of you!

Every single Christian has a gift package:

1 Corinthians 12:7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

II. The Corinthian Context

A. The Corinthians were a GIFTED by SEVERLY DYSFUNCTIONAL church

1. Gifted

1 Corinthians 1:7 you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

i.e.: NOTHING NEEDED IS MISSING! Everything you need for full maturity and fruitfulness is there... all the spiritual gifts are present

2. Severely dysfunctional

- a. 1 Corinthians 1-3: Factions and divisions
- b. Chapter 3: carnality and spiritual immaturity
- c. Chapter 4: worldliness... a desire for success and the approval of the world
- d. Chapters 5-6: sexual sin
- e. Chapter 6: lawsuits among believers
- f. Chapter 7: marital problems
- g. Chapters 8-10: problems with meat sacrificed to idols and idolatry
- h. Chapter 11: problems with feminism, female leaders in the church
- i. Chapter 11: problems with the Lord's Supper

B. As we will see: Corinthian disorder, pride, and lack of love

1. Pride: they wanted the showy spiritual gifts, and tended to disdain the quieter, more behind the scenes gifts like service ("helps")

2. Lack of love: hence the “love chapter”, 1 Corinthians 13
3. Disorder in public worship
 - a. It was mayhem... vast disorder
 - b. People were prophesying one on top of the other; interrupting each other; not evaluating the prophecies; a vast unholy mix of utterances; others were speaking in unintelligible languages without any translations... supernatural gibberish
 - c. Paul’s clear commands show the level of disorder

1 Corinthians 14:23 if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

1 Corinthians 14:29-33 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. ³⁰ And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. ³¹ For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. ³² The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.

³³ For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

1 Corinthians 14:40 But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

C. Pagan spirituality

1. The Greek religions were based on supernatural experiences led by men and women—priests and priestesses—who were “taken over” by the deities... the gods and goddesses could take over a person and brings them to a whole new level of spiritual experience
2. These people would become temporarily insane... acting in otherworldly ways... “ecstatic” or characterized by “ecstasies”; it means to have supernatural union with a god or goddess
3. The Oracle at Delphi was an example... a supernaturally gifted prophetess who would be inhabited by the deity and enabled to utter ecstatic phrases that seemed to come from a heavenly realm
4. The wilder a person behaved, the more they seemed to have been “touched” by the god or goddess; as a matter of fact, the absence of rational thought and orderly behavior seemed greater proof that the person had been inhabited by a god or goddess

Socrates in his work *Phaedrus* extols the blessing of divinely inspired MANIA...

“The greatest of blessings comes to us through madness, when it is sent as a gift of the gods.” A man or woman could seek this mania by appealing to the gods and goddesses by ritual prayers, song, dance, and sacrifice... they would seek trances and otherworldly mania by wild and bizarre behaviors; and these trances were essentially IRRATIONAL... irrational utterances were seen to be the highest evidence of communion with the gods and goddesses

5. These views seemed to have been brought into the church by some of the Corinthian people... it seems to explain the level of disorder and the love of tongues, especially not being translated... the wilder and more ecstatic, the godlier the person seemed to be
6. This explains the level of disorder that Paul is seeking to address... because Paul has already said that idolatry is communion with DEMONS

1 Corinthians 10:20 the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.

7. It seems very plainly that there were some persons in the Corinthian assembly that were being LED ASTRAY in this pagan manner by demons to make demonic utterances

D. Demonic heresy: “Jesus is accursed”

1 Corinthians 12:2-3 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³ Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed,"

1. The term Paul uses “influenced” and “led astray” shows the old pattern of worship in which the mind was dominated by the demonic
2. The person in that pagan religious system was enslaved by the demon, wrapped up in spiritual chains, with their mind dominated by the evil spirit
3. “Mute idols” is a reminder that the idol itself is dead stone or wood or metal... it is MUTE, meaning, it cannot speak
4. But the demonic force behind this ecstatic pagan worship would make them say blasphemous things in the Christian assembly:

“JESUS IS ACCURSED”

5. This is clearly a demonic utterance, but it seems that someone actually said that during one of the Corinthians horribly disordered worship services in which all these spiritual gifts—tongues, prophecies, etc.—were going on in utter mayhem

6. Let's get this straight, says Paul: all we want is Spirit-led worship; and no one speaking by the Spirit can ever say something so blasphemous
 7. Satan and his demons are always trying to slander Jesus Christ... they are attacking his deity, trying to strip him of his honor
 8. This is clear evidence that some of the Corinthian church were under the influence of demons as they uttered this foul statement
- E. Conversely: When the Holy Spirit Moves, He Produces Worship for Jesus as Lord of All

1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

1. The Holy Spirit ALONE can reveal Jesus as Lord to the human heart
2. It is by the Spirit ALONE that a sinner comes to see Jesus of Nazareth, the human being, the Jewish man, born of Mary as what he is: the LORD of the universe... God in the flesh
3. And when the Corinthians are assembled for worship, if the Spirit is moving and in control, he will highly exalt Jesus, and cause everyone there to fall down in worship of Jesus
4. BUT the Spirit does not do this by ecstasy, but by REASONED understanding of right doctrine, which he then IGNITES in our souls to high levels of passion... not disorderly ecstasies

Like the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus who spent time with the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ

Luke 24:32 "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

STOP: Let me ask you now, each of you... has that ever happened to you? Has the Holy Spirit revealed to your heart that Jesus is God... he is the Lord? Has the Spirit convicted you of sin and moved you to call on the name of the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins? Have you trusted in Christ? Are you a Christian?

If not, I am so glad you came here today! It may be that God led you here this morning for exactly this one purpose... that you would acknowledge your sins truthfully and see that Jesus' death on the cross was for sinners like you and me... and that you would call on Jesus Christ to save you

III. The Biblical Context

Four key passages on spiritual gifts: 1 Corinthians 12-14, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4

A. 1 Corinthians 12-14

1. Chapter 12: Spiritual gifts defined & described
2. Chapter 13: Love is essential in spiritual gift ministry
3. Chapter 14: Excesses addressed (prophecy and tongues)

B. Romans 12:1-8

Romans 12:1-8 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

1. Eleven chapters of the gospel... how God saves sinners and fills them with his Holy Spirit
2. Then, Romans 12-16: five chapters on how we should live
3. And he essentially begins with spiritual gifts! That's how important they are
4. Steps to discerning your place in God's work
 - a. Present your bodies as a living sacrifice
 - b. Make sure you are "holy and pleasing to God"

- c. Do not be conformed to this world... don't look on your life and your body and mind like the world does... to be spent how you see fit in pursuing empty pleasures that are nothing but dust in the wind
- d. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind: be saturating your mind in the WORD OF GOD... let a steady intake of the Bible change your whole way of thinking; that will in turn change your whole way of living
- e. Then you will be able to TEST and APPROVE what God's will is for your life... his good, pleasing and perfect will... that means, you will KNOW what role God wants you to play in this world and you will approve of it... delight in it... want to do it
- f. All of that is standard ongoing sanctification, and preparation for the next key step
- g. THEN: verses 3-8 have to do with SPIRITUAL GIFTS
- h. In Romans 12:4-5, Paul uses the analogy of a body with diverse members, like he will in 1 Corinthians 12
- i. But first, you have to not think TOO HIGHLY of yourself... don't be arrogant and think "God is lucky to have someone like me!"
- j. It is by the SHEER GRACE OF GOD that he ever uses any of us at all! He doesn't need us... but he wants to use us
- k. On the other hand, don't think too lowly of yourself either... that's not in Romans 12 but in 1 Corinthians 12

1 Corinthians 12:15-16 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

- l. BUT instead of thinking too highly of yourself or too lowly of yourself, you should THINK OF YOURSELF... yes, ponder yourself... with sober judgment
- m. What are you good at spiritually? What do you like to do? Like Eric Liddell said of his running, "When I run, I feel his pleasure"... running is not a spiritual gift, but hospitality is... serving is... teaching and preaching are... giving is... leadership is... encouragement is...
- n. Paul's command: figure out what your gift package is, and DO IT... do it A LOT

ESV: Romans 12:6-8 having differing gifts, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

C. Ephesians 4:7-16 (next week!)

1. Not just one gift... but an array of gifts in each of us

D. 1 Peter 4:11 (next week)

1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Two main categories of spiritual gifts... SPEAKING and SERVING

So, teaching, prophecy, encouragement, evangelism are speaking gifts

Administration, hospitality, mercy, service are SERVING gifts

IV. The Trinity and the Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all people.

A. The Spirit... gives the gifts

B. The Lord Jesus ... gives the gifts

C. God the Father... gives the gifts

D. More next week!

V. The Purpose of the Gifts: The Common Good

1 Corinthians 12:7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

VI. Applications

A. Ask Yourself This Question: WHAT IS MY MINISTRY?

1. Every single member of the church should have a definable ministry that you are doing regularly

2. If not, and you don't know what that is, seek counsel from the elders or talk about it in your home fellowship
3. It is only by each of us using our spiritual gifts that this church will be built up to reach full maturity in Christ

B. Follow the Steps of Romans 12:1-8

1. Present your bodies to him as a living sacrifice... desire that every moment of your physical life here on earth will be maximally used for God's glory
2. Confess any known sin and move to put sin to death so that your body will be "holy and pleasing to God"
3. Drive out worldly thinking from your mind... do not be conformed to this world... don't think about your life here on earth like a non-Christian; realize a large part of why God left you on earth is to serve others by using your spiritual gifts
4. Saturate your mind in the word of God... be transformed by the renewing of your mind through scripture
5. Seek to "test and approve what God's will is for you... he good, pleasing, and perfect will"
6. Be humble... don't think of yourself more highly than you ought
7. Don't be falsely humble... don't think too lowly of yourself either
8. Think of yourself with sober judgment... ask God "What kind of spiritual gift ministry do I delight in doing?"

Flourish, not merely function!!

All of us are called to do many of these things as Christians... like giving or exercising faith or showing hospitality

The gifts are a matter of flourishing, not just functioning... like the direction of the wind on a lake, and a sailboat

C. Whatever Your Gift Is... Use It!!