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Sermon Notes

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Spiritual Gifts Listed and Described

1 Corinthians 12:7-13; 27-31

One of the most amazing statements ever made about the human race was made by God about the Tower of Babel:

Gen. 11:6 “If as one people speaking one language they have begun to do this, then nothing they propose to do will be impossible for them.”

Human beings, created in the image of God, working together with a common goal is one of the most powerful things on planet earth... a shaper of all history... FOR GOOD OR EVIL

Those building the Tower of Babel were doing it for sinful purposes of PRIDE and DEFIANCE of Almighty God. So also many human empires have risen since then, united by human power, but driven by pride and a lust for conquest.

However, often people have worked together to do good...

For example, the Apollo 11 lunar mission was the culmination of work done by an estimated 400,000 scientists, engineers, technicians, and laborers. The specialization of each of these contributors was staggering – some were mathematical geniuses, some theoretical physicists, some metallurgical researchers, some courageous test pilots, some electrical engineers, some computer programmers... others were hourly workers hired to do simple menial tasks that required almost no special training.

This is just a small picture of something even more complex... a project of staggering complexity that dwarves anything ever achieved by human beings in history... the building of the church of Jesus Christ

It has been developing over two thousand years, employing skilled laborers numbering in the tens of millions, each one with a specific role to play.
BREATH TAKING!

God has ordained that each of the redeemed should have a role to play through spiritual gifts

For two weeks, we have been learning about spiritual gifts...

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

Paul wants to instruct the Corinthians about the varieties of gifts, what the Holy Spirit works in various members of the Body of Christ

Definition: Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by the Triune God to individual Christians for spiritual ministries that build up the Body of Christ.

SPECIAL ABILITIES given for SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

I. One Body, the Same Spirit

A. Paul's Central Point: The Same Spirit Works in All Christians

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

No one is left out... everyone has a role to play!

1. The SAME SPIRIT works in each one according to his infinite wisdom

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

B. One Body

1 Corinthians 12:12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

II. The Ultimate Purpose of the Gifts: Christlike Maturity for the Body

Ephesians 4:12-13 ... so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

III. Spiritual Gifts Individually Described

This morning, I am not going to address the issue of whether or not all the spiritual gifts that Paul lists are still in operation today...

I will address that in coming weeks... the “sign gifts” such as prophecy, miracles, healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues

This morning I will merely describe all the gifts that Paul lists here and in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4. My desire is that you would have a very clear and practical knowledge of these gifts, and specific insights on how they function practically day to day in the church of Jesus Christ.

My goal: **EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY... that every single member of FBC have an identifiable pattern of spiritual ministry**

Begin with vs. 28:

1 Corinthians 12:28 And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

A. Apostles

1. The apostles were men called and chosen by Christ who were humanly speaking the foundation of the church
2. The word literally means “sent one”.... sent as an official messenger... like an Ambassador of the United States government
3. Jesus Christ spent all night in prayer, then called twelve of his disciples to be apostles (Mark 3:13-15)
4. The apostles were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ earthly ministry...
5. After Jesus ascended to heaven and Judas had hanged himself, the church gathered in the Upper Room to fill his place... but the man had to be an EYEWITNESS of Jesus’ ministry and resurrection
6. They cast lots and Matthias was chosen
7. Apostles: Eyewitness to Jesus’ words and actions, and especially of his resurrection from the dead is the foundation of everything that follows, including the New Testament itself

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

8. Some Christians believe that this office continues today in anyone sent with the message of the gospel, like a missionary or a churchplanter... but others believe the role of Apostle ended with the last living Apostle—John—in exile on Patmos, since no one since that time could have been an eyewitness of Christ

B. Prophets, and the Gift of Prophecy (vs. 10)

1. Next on the list after Apostles are prophets
2. The ability to speak a message directly inspired by God...being able to say “thus says the Lord”
3. This gift must be distinguished from teaching and preaching based on the written word of God
4. The gift of prophecy is a new and immediate word from the Lord
5. Example: Acts 11, Agabus predicted that a famine would come
6. I have much more to say about this gift in a future message

C. Teachers

1. Next on the list in 1 Cor. 12:28 are teachers of the Word of God
2. In Ephesians 4:11, Paul combines it with the office of Pastor
3. Any man who would be elder must be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2)
4. So... all Pastors are teachers, but not all teachers are pastors
5. What is the gift of teaching? The ability to understand accurately the written Word of God, and to explain it clearly, applying it to the people’s lives
 - a. Understanding = “rightly dividing”

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

- b. Explaining it clearly and powerfully

Nehemiah 8:8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand

c. Applying it to people's lives for them to OBEY

6. Every Christian to some degree has this ability... but teachers are specially gifted by the Holy Spirit to do it at a high level

D. Evangelists (Ephesians 4:11)

1. Gifted to take the gospel message to those who do not yet believe in Christ... a special subset is those going to people who have never heard of Christ... missionaries
2. All missionaries are evangelists, but not all evangelists are missionaries
3. Missionaries are gifted to travel to foreign lands and learn and adopt foreign cultures and make the gospel clear
4. Evangelists in our culture have a passion to spread the gospel, a passion that burns within them... every day, they think about the lost and boldly move out to speak the word of life to the perishing
5. All Christians are called on to evangelize, but those with the gift of evangelism think about it more frequently and more deeply and are more active every day in this... they conceive of new ways to share the gospel and motivate ordinary Christians to greater levels of faithfulness in evangelism... they develop training techniques, say "Follow me as I follow Christ"
6. Philip, one of the Seven (so-called "deacons" in Acts 6) is called an "evangelist" in Acts 21:8, and he's the one that first brought the gospel to Samaria... also he had that passion for evangelism that resulted in the salvation of the Ethiopian eunuch
7. D.L. Moody was one of the greatest evangelists of church history... made a commitment never to go to bed on any single day without having shared the gospel at least once that day
8. Billy Graham was used by God as the greatest mass evangelist of the 20th century...preached the gospel in Times Square in New York City September 1, 1957
9. Some in our congregation have this gift... they show it by regularly initiating conversations with lost people in everyday life settings—at restaurants, at the workplace, at family gatherings, in street evangelism...

E. Message of wisdom (vs. 8)

1. The ability to speak God's supernatural wisdom into a situation

2. Wisdom is commonly seen as very practical... as in the Book of Proverbs... rubber meets the road, godliness lived out in our speech, spending habits, schedule, family lives, etc.
3. Another way of understanding the “word of wisdom” would be counseling or application of the gospel to personal life situations

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

4. That fits with a biblical counseling role, or perhaps a strategic role: should we as a church do X or Y... this would serve the elders well

F. Message of knowledge (vs. 8)

1. Some people think of this as a supernatural insight into a specific situation or the supernatural ability to know things about people (like Jesus knowing that the Samaritan woman at the well had had five husbands, and the man she was now living with was not her husband)... this MOVED HER!
2. Some people think this “word of knowledge” includes the ability to tell people directly what God wants them to do in a specific situation... like when God told Jeremiah to buy a field right before the Babylonians invaded
3. I have a book entitled *God Told Me to Tell You...* and it’s a critique of the “word of knowledge” concept in charismatic circles in which individuals who think they have this supernatural ability come in a prophetic way to give a word to someone with God’s authority backing it... “Do this” or “Don’t do that”... it’s a little freaky, and seriously questionable... there’s no way to validate it
4. A more normal way of understanding this gift would be a teaching gift, the ability to articulate and impart biblical knowledge to others; but if that’s all this is, why not simply call it “teaching”?

G. Faith (vs. 9)

1. Obviously all Christians have saving faith in Christ, so this spiritual gift goes beyond that
2. It perhaps involves the ability to trust God in extraordinary ways resulting in amazing outcomes for the Kingdom of God

Matthew 17:20 If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

3. We might think that George Mueller may be the most excellent example of the gift of faith in the history of the church... the orphanages he started cared for 10,000 orphans over his lifetime
4. The stories of George Mueller praying in faith and seeing amazing outcomes are legion...
5. The ability to TRUST GOD and VENTURE FORWARD in reliance on his power in NEW WAYS

H. Gifts of Healing (vs. 9)

1. The ability to heal sick people supernaturally
2. This would not be the skill of healing as a trained doctor would have... but miraculous healings

The lame beggar in the Temple gate called Beautiful (Acts 3)

Acts 5:16 Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.

- a. Miracles that Philip (one of the Seven) did in Samaria...

Acts 8:6-8 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. ⁷ With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. ⁸ So there was great joy in that city.

- b. Peter's resurrection of a woman named Dorcas (Acts 9)
- c. The healing ministry of Paul... healing the father of Publius, the leading man on the island of Malta... sick from dysentery; or raising Eutychus from the dead after he had fallen

I believe with all my heart that God heals people in answer to prayer all over the world every single day... but the "gift of healing"?

I. Miraculous Powers (vs. 10)

1. Like the gift of healings, the verses I just covered show this gift as uniquely tied to the apostles

J. Distinguishing Between Spirits (vs. 10)

1. This gift seems to be very closely tied to the gift of prophecy

1 John 4:1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2. As the gift of prophecy was functioning, after a prophetic utterance was made, it was vital for someone with the gift of distinguishing between spirits to identify whether that utterance was from the Holy Spirit or a demonic spirit
3. In 2 Corinthians 11:14, Satan has the ability to masquerade as an “angel of light”, and his messengers can masquerade too
4. So it is like a “food taster” back in the days of Caesar, a servant who would eat some of Caesar’s food to see if it was poisoned

K. Speaking in Tongues (lots of time on this in chapter 14!!)

1. The “gift of tongues” is the supernatural ability to speak a coherent language without having studied that language ...No vocabulary flash cards and audio tracks and a tutor and years of study

L. Interpretation of Tongues (vs. 10)

1. This is the other side of the gift of tongues... the ability to hear someone else speaking a foreign language and understand it and translate it without having studied it
2. Again, we’ll discuss all this more in the future, God willing

M. Helps (vs. 28)

1. This is a broad term, literally someone who lays hold of something for another person...
2. Picture someone who takes a burden off of someone... “Let me carry that for you”
3. This may be the broadest and most common of all spiritual gifts

37 trillion cells in the human body with 200 different types of cells; 80% of all cells are RED BLOOD CELLS...

4. Helps: Anything a Christian does to aid or assist someone else
 - a. Setting up and decorating a room for a reception
 - b. Cooking meals for shut-ins or families who have just had a baby
 - c. Cleaning up in fellowship hall after a men’s breakfast
 - d. Cleaning out the church van after a youth retreat
 - e. Ordering or printing off evangelistic tracts for an outreach

- f. Making coffee for the whole church week after week
 - g. Putting together care packages for missionaries
 - h. Running the sound system so the church can hear the music and the sermons
5. In churches around the world, so many unheralded servants do thankless tasks that never get noticed... mowing the lawn, cleaning toilets at the church, putting out hymnals before worship, doing child care during the service
 6. Jesus said the greatest among us are those who serve everyone else
 7. The original deacons were servants like this... taking meals to the Greek-speaking widows
 8. These kinds of unheralded servants are absolutely essential to the healthy and smooth running of the church week after week

N. Government/Leadership/Administration

1. The ability to lead... the Greek word is related to PILOTING a ship... back in the days of sailing vessels, a skillful pilot was worth his weight in gold... able to sail in and out of a harbor with hidden shoals and not wreck the ship; able to plot a course and navigate by the stars or by a sextant
2. Speaking more directly, this is the ability to lead the church and Christians to a biblical goal... to have the vision for what specific ministries the church should do, what open doors the Lord has set before them, and to mobilize the people to go in that direction
3. To choose a destination, plot the course to get there, get everyone on board, and navigate to that destination
4. Different levels of this gift of leadership
 - a. Some are visionary leaders who can see the destination to which the local church should be sailing
 - b. Others may well be able to orchestrate all the administrative details that go into that mission... to break a complex mission into smaller tasks and assign various ones to do those smaller tasks
 - c. The gift of administration!
5. Biblical examples: Nehemiah and Jethro

- a. Nehemiah saw the plight of the destroyed city of Jerusalem with its wall broken down, had the vision to rebuild it, and motivated the work force to accomplish this massive task
- b. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, saw the logistical nightmare of Moses handling all the court cases for the entire nation of Israel and broke the problem down into a manageable solution

Exodus 18:18-23 select capable men from all the people-- men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain-- and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. ²² Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves.

6. Administrators are PROBLEM-SOLVERS... skillful at breaking a massive task into smaller components
7. Visionary leaders (like Hudson Taylor) can see the teeming millions of lost people in the inland regions of China and mobilize hundreds of missionaries over decades to reach those millions

O. Encouragement (Romans 12:8)

1. Greek *parakaleo*... the word used for the Holy Spirit
2. To come alongside someone with needed words... encouragement, exhortation, counsel
3. These people minister hope in challenging situations... they strengthen sagging hearts, feeble arms, weak knees
4. They speak just the right words at the right time

Prov. 25:11 A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.

5. They speak seasonable words building people up in HOPE and COURAGE...

Numbers 13:30 Then Caleb said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

6. Key example: Barnabas... "Son of encouragement"
 - a. Spoke up for the newly converted Paul at the church in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27)
 - b. Acts 11: a new Gentile church growing in Antioch; the leaders among the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to see what was happening... he said MUCH to encourage that new church

7. Some of you are like Barnabas... speaking hope, building up people's hearts when they are discouraged, sending emails or using Skype encouragement to missionaries or pastors or other Christians
8. You see someone in the hall and the Spirit moves you to speak hope to that person; these encouragers leave behind a trail of strengthened hopeful energized people

P. Giving (Romans 12:8)

1. Every Christian is called to give... but the Greek word in Romans 12:8 is literally "super-givers"
2. Someone with the gift of giving feels the flow of the Spirit and a powerful delight in giving... Romans 12:8 says they are to give literally **with simplicity**... one motive... to MEET THE NEED
3. They don't worry how their own needs will be met

1 John 3:17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

4. So many in the church have the gift of giving... it is not necessarily tied to how much money you have, but the spirit in your heart as you give; you feel God's pleasure when you give
5. Examples from church history: R.G. LeTourneau

R.G. LeTourneau (d. 1969) was the father of the American earth moving industry, inventing and developing HUGE machines for moving earth... equipped the Allied invasion of Normandy with machinery during World War II. His life was changed by the realization that he could serve God as a businessman. He started a construction company and became successful. Amidst his success, LeTourneau gave 90 percent of his earnings to Christian works. LeTourneau said, "I shovel it out as fast as God gives it to me, but God has a bigger shovel."

Q. Mercy

1. The gift of mercy is to see human suffering and desire to alleviate it
2. This extends to all kinds of mercy ministries... Durham Rescue Mission doing relief of the poor in the city, Baptist men doing disaster relief after a hurricane, those visiting homebound and people in hospitals, those doing bereavement ministries, people involved in orphan care or foster care of children, medical missionaries using their skills to set up a rudimentary clinic in Haiti

3. Mercy ministries are often a powerful platform for the gospel

R. Hospitality

1 Peter 4:9-10 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

1. Opening your home to others...
2. Home Fellowships depend on this ministry
3. Others use hospitality for evangelism... inviting lost neighbors or coworkers over for meals and sharing the gospel with them

IV. Applications

A. Come to Christ

B. Discover, Develop, Deploy!!

C. Ask Yourself... "What is my pattern of ministry?"