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Sermon Notes

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## **An Introduction to Spiritual Gifts, Part 2**

### **1 Corinthians 12:1-7**

Last week, we began a vital study in the area of spiritual gifts... the amazing way that God has gifted each member of the church, the body of Christ, to do specific works that are essential to the health and growth of the body.

The best analogy Paul will use for spiritual gifts is the human body itself:

***Romans 12:4-6 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.***

***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.***

Think of the staggering complexity of the human body... the amazing way that God has arranged the various systems of the body to work together to keep us alive and enable us to do all the things we can do...

***Psalms 139:13-14 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup> I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.***

Think of the major systems of the body...

- The circulatory system... which circulates blood around the body by means of the heart and the blood vessels – the arteries and veins – and the red blood cells which deliver oxygen and

nutrients to every other cell of the body, keeping it alive; and also carries away waste products from those cells

- The digestive system... which absorbs nutrients from food and removes waste from the body via the GI tract, and the mouth, the esophagus and the intestines
- The endocrine system... which affects the overall function of the body by means of hormones
- The exocrine system... your skin, hair, sweat glands, which protects the body from its surroundings
- The immune system, which defends the body against diseases which could kill it
- The skeletal system, which is the structural framework on which the whole body is founded
- The muscular system, which enables us to move in the world and do all the actions we need to do
- The nervous system, which collects and processes information from the surrounding world by the brain, and which controls all the muscles of the body, telling them when and how to contract and expand, thus enabling all the movement functions of the body
- The respiratory system, by which air is brought into the body – oxygen is absorbed, carbon dioxide removed, keeping us alive

It is all staggering in its complexity and unity... its marvelous specialization – liver cells doing what they do; antibodies doing what they do, brain cells doing what they do... all of them essential to the life of the body

Scientists estimate that the average human body contains approximately 37.2 trillion cells

Amazingly, the vast majority of the cells in our bodies are red blood cells... they make up over 80% of the cells in our body, though

by weight, only 4-8% of the total mass of the body. In fact, we have so many red blood cells that if the number in an average human body were laid end to end, they would encircle the Earth four times, despite the fact they are incredibly tiny.

The human nose can detect about 1 trillion different smells

As an ex-mechanical engineer, the human hand is particularly fascinating to me... the hand contains 27 bones, 29 joints, and at least 123 named ligaments

I think about the astonishing strength of a single finger in a rock climber like Alex Honnold, who free-soloed the 3000 foot wall named El Capitan in Yosemite; he has massive hands with the ability to hang his entire body weight from tiny cracks and almost imperceptible bumps in the granite wall for amazingly long periods of time

Then there's the astonishing dexterity of a concert pianist

At any rate, the same God who arranged the human body in unity with amazing diversity has also arranged the Body of Christ, the church, with spiritual gifts... differing functions... that are essential to the health, growth, and fruitfulness of the whole church... the completion of the mission of Christ in the world is entrusted to the church – meaning primarily the local churches around the world, and the proper functioning of spiritual gift ministries in the church is vital

FBC Durham cannot be everything God wants us to be without each member identifying and using his or her spiritual gifts fully

All of this is in service to the overall mission of Christ – called the "Great Commission":

***Matthew 28:19-20 go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."***

Spiritual gifts are to enable to church worldwide to fulfill this Great Commission... as the apostles and prophets wrote scripture, and as evangelists and missionaries took that message across mountains and oceans and rivers and deserts to the distant coastlands and the teeming cities, and as pastor-teachers settled in and unfolded the scriptures to the churches that were planted, then the various gifts began to flourish in those churches – and people with the gifts of leadership mobilized the church to venture out in various ways of outreach and service in that community, and people with gifts of administration organized those ministries for maximum effectiveness, and people with gifts of mercy served suffering people, and people with gifts of hospitality opened their homes as bases of operation and ministry and made their guests feel warmly welcomed, and people with gifts of evangelism shared the gospel with outsiders, and people with gifts of service did the countless unseen tasks necessary to make everything run smoothly, and people with gifts of prayer called down heaven’s invisible power and blessings on everything.

All of it was in the service of the Great Commission... winning lost people to salvation in Christ and building them up to full maturity in the Lord.

Alistair Begg put it wonderfully:

“God’s gifts are given to God’s people so that the lost in God’s world can come into God’s kingdom.”

Review of last week’s introduction

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

#### II. The Corinthian Context

- A. The Corinthians were a GIFTED by SEVERLY DYSFUNCTIONAL church
- B. As we will see: Corinthian disorder, pride, and lack of love
- C. Pagan spirituality: FRENZIED MANIA
- 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. <sup>3</sup> Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed,"***

- 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.***

### 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. Last week: Romans 12:1-8

#### C. Now, Ephesians 4:7-16

***Ephesians 4:7-16 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." <sup>9</sup> (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) <sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.***

### Lessons

#### 1. Unity and Diversity

- a. Verse 7 begins with "But"

b. CONTRAST with what he'd been saying before

***Ephesians 4:4-6 There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.***

c. So the UNITY of the Body of Christ is essential...

d. But though we are all part of the one Body of Christ, that does not mean we are identical... there is a beautiful DIVERSITY OF FUNCTION in the body... just as our physical bodies have many members and these members do not all have the same function

## 2. Universality of Gifting

a. Each and every Christian has a spiritual gift package

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

b. It would be easy for some Christians to think, "Because I am not a preacher or called to vocational ministry, I have no role to play"

Larry Jacobs, Roman Catholic co-worker... priests wear uniforms like players in an NFL football game; how can the spectators jump down onto the field and play?

c. But that is exactly the attitude Paul is trying to get rid of!

***1 Corinthians 12:15 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.***

## 3. Spiritual gifts are called "Grace from God"

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

"Grace" = *charis*... from which we get the word "charismatic"; the idea is that spiritual gifts are grace from God... not deserved;

part of God's overall program of grace for his chosen people...  
grace that results in our salvation

***1 Corinthians 15:9-10 I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.***

#### **4. Spiritual gifts are Measured out by Christ**

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

Literally "according to the measure (*metron*) of Christ

This is an intentional act on Christ's part; thoughtful, carefully done; he considers each of us individually and decides what spiritual gift package to give us, and how much of each aspect to give

There are many gifted preachers in the church of Jesus Christ; but some have much more of that gift than others... George Mueller had the most developed gift of faith I've ever read about; no one was as effective an evangelistic preacher as George Whitefield; Corrie Ten Boom was incredibly gifted with the gift of mercy... other Christians have the same gifts as these three, but not in the same measure... but whatever MEASURE your gift is, it is YOURS, portioned out to you by Christ himself

The Trinity... the TRIUNE GOD is involved, all three persons of the Trinity pondering you and gifting you

***Psalm 139:1-3 O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup> You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.***

***Psalm 139:17-18 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! <sup>18</sup> Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.***



5. **Spiritual gifts are BLOOD-BOUGHT... part of the atoning work of Christ**

*Ephesians 4:8-10 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." <sup>9</sup> (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)*

6. **The Word of God PRIMES THE PUMP for All Ministry:**

*Ephesians 4:11-12 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service*

Apostles and prophets were those by whom the word of God came originally... the scripture was founded on the WORD OF GOD through the prophets of the Old Testament (like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel) and the Apostles of the New Testament (Matthew, John, Peter, Paul)

The word of God was taken to distant places by evangelists, who crossed rivers and mountains and oceans to bring God's word to those who had never heard it before

Pastor/teachers were established in each local church to teach the word of God to the flocks established there

The word of God PRIMES THE PUMP for all works of service in the church...

*"to prepare God's people for works of service"*

This is why Paul is saying "I don't want you to be IGNORANT about spiritual gifts"

7. **Spiritual gifts result in WORKS OF SERVICE**

- a. The spiritual gifts result in a continual flow of good works by all the people of God

- b. As a church has a faithful teaching ministry, the people are unleashed to serve in countless ways
- c. All those works are essential to God's plan for saving his elect through faith in Christ and building them up to maturity in Christ

8. **The ULTIMATE GOAL of spiritual gifts is the FULL MATURITY of the body of Christ...** "unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God" = total conformity to Christ

*Ephesians 4:12-13 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> 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.*

*Ephesians 4:14-15 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

- 9. Every spiritual gift is essential to that final goal

*Ephesians 4:16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

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

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

A churchplanter in an overseas setting must have an array of many gifts... evangelism, prayer, teaching, administration, cross-cultural missions, visionary leadership

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!

IV. ANOTHER KEY TEXT: 1 Peter 4:11

***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

V. 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?"

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