

## THE MINISTRY GIFTS

**TEXT: EPH. 4:7-16**

### **Introduction:**

1. Last week we studied the unity of the church (4:3-6). Tonight, we shall look at the diversity of the church.
2. “Unity is not monotonous uniformity” (Fitzwater).
3. Each member of the local church has a particular role assigned to him or her. No two members are alike, and no two members have exactly the same function.
4. The part to be played by each church member is assigned “according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (4:7).
5. As each member fulfills his appointed assignment, the church grows both spiritually and numerically.
6. Tonight, we will look at the ministry gifts, which are part of God’s program for the local church.

### **I. THE GIVING OF THE GIFTS**

### **II. THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS**

### **III. THE EFFECTUAL WORKING OF THE GIFTS**

#### **I. THE GIVING OF THE GIFTS (4:7-11).**

1. The Holy Spirit gives the gifts, and the Holy Spirit Himself is the gift (cf. John 14:16, 17; Acts 2:38, 39).
2. In other words, a gift is the Holy Spirit working through the believer for the purpose of building up the local church (cf. I Cor. 12:7, 11).
3. First Corinthians 12-14 and Romans 12 deal extensively with this important matter of spiritual gifts.
4. Each believer is given a gift so that he or she may function in the body (the church) in a particular way.
5. My eyes would not do me much good apart from the rest of my body, neither would my arms, legs, ears, etc.
6. My body needs all the members to function properly. Likewise, for the body of Christ to function properly – all members need to work together. *This* is the “unity of the Spirit” Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4:3.
7. Notice the gifts are for all – “But unto every one of us...” (Eph. 4:7).
8. The more gifts we have, the more grace we need. That is why Paul spoke of grace being “according to the measure of the gift” (4:7).
9. Along with the gift, every one of us is given grace to exercise that gift in the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit. When each believer is

- exercising his or her gift, it produces harmony as does each member of the human body. (The converse is true also.)
10. Paul quotes Psalm 68:18 but you will notice it is a bit different (Eph. 4:8). The Holy Spirit is allowed to do that but we are not allowed to do that.
  11. One of the marks of a cult is their changing, adding, and omitting words in the Bible. Paul refers to this as “the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (4:14).
  12. Back in Ps. 68:18, we are told that the Lord Jesus Christ “had received gifts for men.” Then He came to earth, died on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven.
  13. Now, up in heaven, He is distributing the gifts among men – He “gave gifts unto men” (4:8b).
  14. How is He giving gifts unto men? Through the Holy Spirit.
  15. “He led captivity captive” (4:8) refers to all the saints who died before Calvary and went to paradise when they died. Remember, our Lord said to the thief on the cross, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).
  16. Our Lord referred to paradise as “Abraham’s bosom” in Luke 16:22.
  17. Christ took these OT believers with Him out of paradise, and into the very presence of God when He ascended into heaven. That is why Paul says that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8).
  18. Now, when Christ ascended He also gave gifts to men (4:8). The scope of the gifts is paralleled with the scope of Christ’s victory – His resurrection and His ascension (4:7-11).
  19. “The lower parts of the earth” (4:9) refers to hell. However, the Bible says little about this. The charismatic (e.g., Kenneth Copeland) teaching that our Lord was tortured in hell by demons is blasphemy.
  20. Now in Eph. 4:11, Paul names the gifts to the local church:
    - (1) Apostles – men who were directly commissioned by the Lord to preach the Word and plant churches. They had seen the resurrected Saviour (Acts 1:22), and had power to perform miracles (cf. II Cor. 12:12) as a means of confirming the message they preached (cf. Heb. 2:4). Together with the prophets, they laid the foundation for the church (Eph. 2:20).
    - (2) Prophets – spokesmen for God. They received direct revelation from the Lord and passed it on to the church (cf. Acts 11:27-30; 21:10-13).

- (3) Evangelists – those who preach the Gospel and win souls; generally understood to be itinerant preachers like Paul (church planters, missionaries, etc.).
  - (4) Pastors – those who guide and feed the flock. The pastor has the same office as bishop and elder (cf. Acts 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4).
  - (5) Teachers – Because pastors and teachers are linked in this verse, some conclude that it means “pastor-teachers.” They have a point, for all pastors must be “apt to teach” (I Tim. 3:2b). However, these are two different gifts and two different offices. Some men are gifted Bible teachers but have not been called to the office of pastor.
- 21. We should distinguish between divine gifts and natural talents. Some men have natural talents but cannot serve as evangelists or pastors unless God calls them.
  - 22. God takes our natural talents and sanctifies them for His use.

## **II. THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS (4:12-14).**

- 1. It is good to stop at this point and ask, “What is the purpose of these gifts?”
- 2. According to Ephesians 4:12, they are “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying (building up) of the body of Christ.”
- 3. This is God’s program:
  - (1) The evangelists, pastors, and teachers teach and disciple the saints. They are then equipped for the work of the ministry. They are being “perfected.”
  - (2) The saints then do “the work of the ministry,” i.e. they serve God in their local church (teaching SS, preaching, singing, ushering, soulwinning, working in the nursery, etc.).
  - (3) The church is then edified or built up – both spiritually and numerically.
- 4. There is a popular misconception (largely due to the RCC with their unscriptural priesthood and hierarchy), that the ministry is for priests or “ministers.” According to the NT, all Christians are priests and ministers.
- 5. The “ministry” is not restricted to pastors, evangelists, missionaries, or those in full-time Christian service. All Christians should serve (minister).

6. All Christians should be reproducing themselves. On a usual Sunday, we usually have a few first-time visitors. Now, if each one of us brought one visitor, we would double our attendance. This is how the church is “edified” (4:12), or built up numerically.
7. It is built up spiritually by the preaching of the Word of God.
8. Expecting the pastor to do all the soulwinning, and all the visiting, and all the calling, and all the inviting and all the tract distribution is unscriptural.
9. This mindset hinders the development of the individual church members, stifles the outreach of the church, slows down the progress of the church, limits the missions program, and stunts the growth of the church.
10. How long will this program continue? “Till we all come in the unity of the faith...” (4:13). In other words, when we get to heaven.
11. Today we have our disagreements, some major, most minor. But in heaven there will be perfect unity.
12. “The measure of the stature” (4:13) means our complete development. Today we are in the process of being conformed to the image of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29). But we are not there yet.
13. Another reason God has gifted the church is so “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro...” (4:14). Christians who are not actively engaged in serving God in a good local church are tossed to and fro, and are carried about with every wind of doctrine (e.g., many radio listeners).
14. Folks that are not grounded in a good local church are susceptible to all of the strange doctrines, passing fads and gimmicks so prevalent in religious circles.
15. These people tend to become religious gypsies, moving here and there, hither and thither, tossed to and fro like a boat on rough waters, moving from one church to another, never settling down in any one church. I have met scores of these people over the years.
16. These church-hopping hobos are easily deceived “by the sleight of men” (like card sharks on streets tricking and cheating gullible passers-by).

### **III. THE EFFECTUAL WORKING OF THE GIFTS (4:15, 16)**

1. The effectual working of the gifts results in our “growing up into (unto) Him in all things” (4:15).
2. If we are to “grow up,” there must be the proper balance. As parents, we see to it that our children get a balanced diet, and the proper balance between work and play, etc. Growing a church is the same way.

3. That is why it is important that we be “speaking the truth in love” (4:15). Some churches never speak the truth, and some seldom do. And then there are those which speak the truth, but not in love. (Illustration of Bible college student who told a Jewish lady that her deceased husband was in hell).
4. Note the perfection of the human body. God has intricately fitted everything together. David said, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14).
5. Shakespeare has Hamlet say: “What a piece of work is man!” The human body is a beautiful illustration of the body of Christ.
6. If we all do our part, “the whole body (will be) fitly joined together” (4:16). Every church member is important just like every member of the body is important.
7. Someone has said that not everyone can be one of the larger members, but the joints are very important too for the body to function properly. All parts must work together.
8. As each church member fulfills his proper role, the body grows and God blesses. This building process is done “in love” (4:16).

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Note Paul mentions the word “love” twice (4:15, 16).
2. Why? Because, love is the most important ingredient in our spiritual growth. A church can be very fundamental, but if it lacks love it will grow cold and die (cf. Rev. 2:1-5).