

## Eph. 4:11-13 (WCF 25:3) “Means, Marks and Ministry”

**For the Children:** If someone gives you a gift of clothing – let’s say a dress or a shirt – and you like it and wear it all the time, people will sometimes put you and the item of clothing together in their minds. Especially if the piece of clothing is something bright and colourful, or a little bit different. When they see you coming, they will think, “Oh look, he’s got that shirt on again! It must be glued on!” When we receive the gifts the Lord Jesus has given us, and use them to help each other in the church, it makes the whole church stand out – as belonging to the Lord Jesus and marked by the gifts He gives. That is especially true of the gifts that have to do with sharing His Word. The Word of God gives the church her character. **Questions:** What are the gifts mentioned in Eph. 4:11-13 that help bring the Word of God? How important is God’s Word in the life of the church? What purposes does God have in giving these gifts to the church?

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### **Introduction:**

#### **First Point: What the Lord Jesus Christ Has Given to the Church**

- **He Gave:** As the ascended Lord, Christ has distributed gifts to His people. He even enables us to use these gifts rightly, by the work of His Spirit. This is what defines the church, giving it the structure and shape it has. The church is not a merely human institution with a man-made structure – it is Christ’s creation
- **Focus on Word-Gifts:** The gifts mentioned here specifically focus on those that are Word-related – the eye-witnesses, messengers, proclaimers and explainers of the Word (apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers). For it is the Word of Christ that creates and defines the church. It is absolutely central. The apostles and prophets are therefore said to be *foundational* for the church (Eph. 2:20-21)
- **Not from Man:** The gifts are not from man, but given to him. The calling to use these gifts is also from the Lord. A man may not thrust himself forward. He must be gifted and called of the Lord, as recognized by the church. For the gifts are given for the church, not just the individual (v. 12)
- **The Marks of the True Church:** Because these gifts define the church, they are her “marks” as well – to use the language of BCF 29. Although the WCF does not use the term, it does teach the concept: that Christ’s giving of the ministry, oracles and ordinances, define the church. By that, it means the preaching, administration of the sacraments, church discipline, and also proper worship
- **The Means of Grace:** The gifts of Christ also provide the “means of grace” – for the gathering and perfecting of the saints. In Continental Calvinism, these means are the preaching/ and reading of the Word and the sacraments. English Calvinism adds prayer to that

#### **Second Point: Why He Gave It**

- **Equipping and Edifying:** The purposes for which Christ supplies the Word-gifts include the equipping of the saints or works of service; and the building up of the whole Body, the church. The gifts are not given simply for private use. They are given to strengthen church and enable her to grow. See 1 Cor. 12
- **Unity of the Faith and Knowledge:** As the Word-gifts are shared, they also build greater unity in the church. This is not the unity of a club, but under Christ the Head of the Body, and in the knowledge of Him. It is unity-in-Truth – the truth we confess. We have that unity as a “given” in Christ, in principle; but we grow in it, in practice, until we attain to the fullness of it. That needs work, as we seek to be more and more of the same mind in the truth
- **To a Mature Man:** The purpose of the gifts is also Christian maturity. Word and Spirit transform us more and more into the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Christ is the standard of that maturity. The fullness of the strength and balance of the man of God is seen in Him. As we share the Word-gifts with each other, we encourage that growth in maturity

### **Conclusion:**