



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Holy Spirit's Work of Giving Spiritual Gifts - I: the Permanent Gifts”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] -- anticipation of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit as we ponder the word of God. And we pray that as we consider the difficult subject of spiritual gifts, that Thou will help us to come to come to an understanding of the teaching of Thy word with regard to them. We pray that we may be open to the Spirit's teaching and responsive.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the first in a series of five studies on the Holy Spirit's Work of Giving Spiritual Gifts. And tonight, we're going to look at the permanent spiritual gifts. And then, we're going to look at the temporary spiritual gifts, and we're going to devote two times, particularly, to the question of the gift of tongues because that is such a problem in the Christian Church today. And, we also will devote one night to the gift of healing. So I hope as result of our study spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit that we will have an understanding of this important subject.

Now, will you take your Bibles and turn, first of all, to 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, and let's read one of the many passages on this topic. 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verses 4

through 11 and then verses 28 and 29. 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verses 4 through 11 then verses 28 and 29.

Now, I think if we are beginning a study of spiritual gifts, it would be well for us, over the next few weeks, to constantly read and re-read the passages that have to do with spiritual gifts. And later on, we’re going to look at or I’m going to, at least, give you the four great passages on the subject. And, I think it would be enlightening for you, I hope to do this myself, to read over and over these four great passages on spiritual gifts. Now, this is one of them 1 Corinthians, chapter 12. So, now, let’s read beginning with verse 4.

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, or workings but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”

Now, that is one of the texts that teaches that every single Christian has at least one spiritual gift. “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” I think it’s rather interesting that in all of the four great passages on the doctrine of spiritual gifts there is a reference to the fact that each of us possesses at least one spiritual gift. So this is extremely important, apparently. Now, Paul continues, verse 8.

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”

“The Permanent Gifts (the Holy Spirit in Spiritual Gifts)” by S. Lewis Johnson
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Now, notice that last simple clause, “As he will.” In other words, the gifts of the Spirit are given sovereignly. That is, as the Holy Spirit, himself, wills it. Now, let’s look at verses 28 and 29:

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”

Now, it’s evident, by the way, that this is something of an evaluation of these gifts; for some of these gifts were in existence, practically, as early as or earlier than some of the gifts that are mentioned before hand. Now, Paul, in verse 29 says “Are all apostles?” The implication of the Greek text is, no. “Are all prophets?” No. “Are all teachers?” No. “Are all workers of miracles?” No. “Have all the gifts of healing?” No. “Do all speak with tongues?” No. “Do all interpret?” No.

Now, the Greek has a way of indicating the kind of answer that is expected by the question and the answer expected by each of these questions given by Paul is, no. But, that’s to anticipate a little bit something that we’re going to say, so we’ll drop it with that.

But this, I say, for those of you who have just come in is the first of a series of studies on one of the most important contemporary problems in the Christian Church. And, at the outset, we must distinguish our terms so that we will understand each other and understand what we are talking about.

Now, one of the first things that we must learn to distinguish is first the gift of the Spirit, gift of the Spirit. What do we mean when we say the gift of the Spirit? Now, the reference of the gift of the Spirit. I see that didn’t appear on the thing, but I just wrote gift. The gift of the Spirit is a reference of one or two things. First, to the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. We can refer to Pentecost as the gift of the Spirit or to his initial and final coming to the believer to indwell us, permanently. In other words, when we speak

of the gift of the Spirit, then, we are speaking of one or two things, the context will determine it. We are speaking first, perhaps, of the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to carry out his special activity during this present age. We can speak of that as the gift of the Spirit. Or we can speak of the moment that we believe in Jesus Christ and the coming of the Spirit then, for it is then that we receive the gift of the Spirit who indwells us permanently as long we are Christians. So the gift of the Spirit, then, is a term that is designed to refer to one or those two things.

Now, second -The gifts of the Spirit. The term the gifts of the Spirit, plural, is a reference to the sovereign spiritual abilities bestowed upon every believer in Jesus Christ when he believes in Christ. Every believer has at least one of these spiritual abilities, which is given to him the moment that he believes in Christ. Now, these sovereign abilities or these gifts are given to us for the service of God. You’ll notice, 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 says, verse 11 says “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” They are sovereign bestowments of the Holy Spirit designed for service in the Christian Church and in its activities. That’s the term, the gifts of the Spirit. So the gift of the Spirit refers to his coming to indwell me when I believe in Jesus Christ or the Day of Pentecost, historically. The gifts of the Spirit refers to the spiritual abilities that are given to us when we believe in Christ, in order to do the will of God, to serve him acceptably.

There is, also, another term that we may use, the graces of the Spirit. What are the graces of the Spirit? Well, the graces of the Spirit are references to the spiritual virtues produced by the Spirit in our lives. For example, if we say with regard to a Christian that he has love. Well that is a grace of the Holy Spirit, produced by the Holy Spirit. They reveal the sanctity of a believer’s life. For example, when Paul in Galatians, chapter 5, verses 22 and 23, speaks of, “The fruit of the Spirit” as being, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,” etc. these nine virtues which make

up the “fruit” singular, of the Holy Spirit. These nine virtues are the graces produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. So, they are the graces of the Spirit.

Now, we may also use the term the offices of the Spirit. Now, the offices of the Spirit is a term that refers to the spiritual positions, possibly functions, in the local church, the functions of or the offices of, for example, elder, or deacon. These are the two great offices in the local church, and they are given by the Holy Spirit. And elders and deacons serve under our Lord, who ministers through them in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, let me read two verses from Acts, chapter 20, verses 17 and 18. Now, here Luke writes with reference to Paul’s visit to the Ephesians’ elders at Miletus. Verse 17 we read in Acts, chapter 20 “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.” Now, notice what is said about the elders of the church in verse 28 “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.” In other words, the elders are the overseers of the flock of God. By the way, that word “overseers” is our word “bishops.” And so, the elders and bishops are the same term. Now, when we speak of a man as an elder, we’re referring to a man who has office in the local church and by the term elder we refer to his spiritual maturity. When we talk about his office of oversight and call him a bishop, we are referring to his function; that is what an elder does, he “oversees.”

Now, notice, he says.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

So notice, it is the Holy Spirit who makes elders. Now, elders are not appointed by other elders. Now, we may recognize other men as elders. And, the elders may get together and say to the congregation of believers “as we have observed the life and

activity of a certain brother in the local church, we have become convinced that he meets the qualifications of 1 Timothy, chapter 3, for elders in Titus, chapter 1, and by virtue of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we feel that it is proper for us to ask him to serve with us as one of the overseers in the local church.” Now, we are recognizing the fact that he meets the qualifications and he has the desire to shepherd the flock of God.

Now, we do not make him an elder; he is made an elder by the Holy Spirit. We may recognize him but that is all that we can do. “Over which the Holy ghost hath made you overseers.” So the offices that exist in the local church are spiritual positions to which men are appointed by the Holy Spirit.

Now, that is extremely important. That is why in so many of our churches we have men who do not have the requisite qualifications for office. They have been appointed by men. They have been elected by a congregation. You never have that in the New Testament. No congregation ever elected its shepherds in the New Testament. Now, it would seem that churches, therefore, would not do that. But, you see, we have been affected by the democratic system so much that we have allowed that human system to intrude into the church, which was never intended to be a democracy. It is ruled by elders, and these elders are appointed by God. And thus, it is ruled by God through his appointed representatives.

So when we talk then about the gift of the Spirit, we are referring to Pentecost, or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, given to us when we believe in Jesus Christ. The gifts of the Spirit are the spiritual abilities sovereignly bestowed upon every one of us for spiritual service. The graces of the spirit are spiritual virtues produced by the Holy Spirit. They have to do with sanctity or holiness of individual Christian living. And the offices of the Spirit are the offices of elder and deacon, spiritual positions, perhaps, functions is a better word. And these are given by the Holy Spirit and these offices serve in the oversight of the local church.

Now, we are concerned with spiritual gifts in this series. And, we’re taking the position that these gifts may be divided into two classes; that is, that there are permanent spiritual gifts and there are temporary spiritual gifts. And I’m going to have to ask you for tonight, to reserve your judgment on my assumption until next time when we talk about temporary gifts. But, we’re taking the position that it is Biblical to distinguish between the permanent spiritual gifts and the temporary gifts. And, I hope to give support for this next time. Now, we are not claiming that the Bible has a specific text that says, “there are temporary gifts and there are permanent gifts.” And, I want you to understand that. I am not saying there is a text in the Bible that says that. If there was, there would not be any question about this matter at all. No one would have any disagreement over it. We could just point to that text and say, there it is. That would settle all arguments. What I am saying, however, is that that is the Biblical teaching, as far as I can tell.

Now, we must remember that we do not have texts for every thing that the Bible teaches. We do not have, for example, a text about the Trinity. You’ve heard me say that a half a dozen times, because it’s a very good crutch for a lot of things I want to say from time to time. If I’m without a specific text on one point, I can say, it’s like the doctrine of the Trinity. It is something that is an induction from other or many passages of Scripture. And so, the doctrine of temporary spiritual gifts is not to be ruled out because there is no verse that specifically says that. Because, that is, as I say, there is no text that says there is a Trinity, but we are quite sure that that is the teaching of the Bible.

We are, however, saying that there are hints in the word of God at the temporary character of certain spiritual gifts; and we will refer to them and I will expound those texts. And, I have in mind, particularly, 1 Corinthians, chapter 13 in verse 11. Not the common verse that is frequently referred to, but verse 11 and Hebrews, chapter 2 in verse 4. And further, I am saying this that history in experience has also confirmed these hints that we have in the word of God about temporary gifts. But now, let’s save that for next time when we talk about the temporary gifts.

I just want to let you know that tonight, when you look at my outline and you see roman I - the delineation of the permanent gifts of the Spirit, you will understand that this is based on an assumption. So, I don’t want to deceive you or confuse you.

Now, I know my Pentecostal friends, at this point, will say, everything that happened in the early church is for us today. And, therefore, we cannot distinguish between permanent and temporary spiritual gifts. But now, I don’t believe that even they believe what they say because we do not have people raising others from the dead. There are many things that happened in the early church that are not happening today. You do not have, for example, a man looking at another man like Paul did at Elymas, the sorcerer, and looking at him in such a way that he turns blind. You do not have that today. You do not have other things that we had in the early church. You do not have, for example, a man lying as Ananias and Sapphira did and then falling down dead when his lie is discovered by someone in the local church. Now, that does not happen today. There are many things that do not happen today that happened in the earliest days of the Christian church. So I do not believe, really, that my Pentecostal friends believe what they say. But, I know they say that and it’s perfectly all right for them to say it. We shall look at Scripture and see what it has to say about the question.

Now, tonight roman I - The delineation of the permanent gifts of the Spirit. I said that there are four great passages on spiritual gifts. They are easy to remember because one of them is Romans, chapter 12, one is 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, the third is Ephesians, chapter 4, and the fourth is 1 Peter, chapter 4. And so, we have two chapters are twelve chapters and two chapters that are four chapters. These are the four great doctrinal sections on spiritual gifts, 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter, chapter 4. So, I think these are four chapters you ought to be reading over and over again in the next few weeks. There are over twenty spiritual gifts referred to in the New Testament. In other words, if you will examine these four passages, you can probably find over twenty specific spiritual gifts that are referred to.

I have, often, wondered about this. Is this the total number of spiritual gifts that are given by the Holy Spirit? Or, are these simply a sample of some of the gifts that he gives? Now, it’s striking that there is no gift mentioned of singing solos in the Sunday morning service. And are we to assume that the person who is the soprano soloist in the choir on Sunday morning does have a spiritual gift, after all? Paul was only giving us a sample of the kinds of gifts that we have? Or should we say that these twenty plus are the only gifts that are spiritual gifts and what ever the soprano soloist may have, I hope it’s some talent at least, she would not be having a spiritual gift in the New Testament sense. I don’t know the answer to that question. Perhaps, you can think it over and mull it over and let me know what you think about it. But, I do know that there are many spiritual gifts; over twenty of them specifically referred to.

Now, you will notice, I have not referred to the historical passages in which his spiritual gifts are referred to. We will talk about those historical passages Acts 2, Acts 8, Acts 10, and Acts 19. These are the four great historical passages, for example, on tongues. We will talk about them but these are the four great doctrinal passages.

Now, as a result of our study of these passages, I have selected what I think are the seven most important permanent gifts of the Spirit. And, we’re going to discuss them for a while now. Then, we’re going to look at the purpose of them and finally ask ourselves the question how may we know that we have a spiritual gift?

Now , capital A in our outline - The gift of evangelist. Will you turn with me to Ephesians, chapter 4. This is one of the passages, which refers to a number of the gifts. And, we read in Ephesians 4, verse 11, these words “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;” Now, you can tell from the fact that I mention evangelist first that I regard apostle as a temporary gift.

So, evangelist, then. Now, to distinguish the evangelist from an apostle is not an easy thing. I would think that apostles and prophets give us truth. That is, Paul, by virtue of his apostleship was able to give us new truth. That is the particular work of a prophet,

however. The prophet was one who gave new truth, like Agabus. Now, the evangelist is one who gives out the truth that has already been given. And he is one who preaches the gospel. He is the person who is used by God to bring men to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Who have been some of the great evangelists of history? Well, I don’t know. I think Paul was a multi-gifted man. So I would regard Paul as a man who possessed the gift of evangelism. But outside of the New Testament, I would think that a man like Luther had the gift of evangelism. I think one of the premiere evangelists was George Whitfield. I still think he was the greatest evangelist that ever preached the Gospel in the United States of America. Now, he was a Britisher, I think he was the greatest evangelist that ever preached in Britain too. In fact, I think, myself, he was the greatest evangelist since the days of the apostles. That happens to be my viewpoint. And, it’s not entirely because he was a Calvinist. [Laughter] Although, I must say, that enters into it to some extent. But he was a great man.

Jonathan Edwards, I would regard as an evangelist. Well, how can you explain a ministry like Edwards’? He read from a manuscript in a squeaky voice a sermon, Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God. And, the whole audience was tremendously impressed and cried out audibly for salvation. Now, how would you feel on Sunday morning, if I went into the pulpit and in a high, squeaky voice read a lengthy manuscript of deep theology?

Well, I imagine I wouldn’t see many of you the next Sunday, if it was known that that was the kind of message that was going to be given the next Sunday. That man had the gift of evangelism and God worked through his ministry in a remarkable way in the saving of souls.

Capital B - The gift of pastor-teacher. Notice verse 11. This, by the way, is the only place in the New Testament where pastor-teacher is referred to. Teaching is referred to in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 28. I have the text listed there. “And, he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and

teachers.” Now, you will notice that in the outline, I have put a hyphen between pastor and teacher. The reason for that is that in the Greek text the construction is such that Paul regards the pastor-teacher as one gift. In other words, he does not speak of pastors and then of teachers. But the gift that he speaks of is one gift, the gift of pastor-teacher.

Now, the pastor, then, I would think, is always a teacher. No man is ever really a pastor who is not, also, a teacher of Scripture. That doesn’t necessarily mean he should be the kind of man who gets in the pulpit and is able to maintain over a long period of time interest in a great number of people. His gift may not be that magnificent. But every pastor should be able to teach the word. Now, the fact that in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 28, teaching is mentioned separately, leads me to believe that some men may have the gift of teaching but who are not very gifted as pastors or shepherds. But every shepherd should be a teacher. Every teacher is not necessarily a shepherd. I think that’s by confirmation and experience, but experience is not our test of doctrine. It is only confirmation. Every pastor that I’ve ever known has been able to teach, but there are a lot of teachers that you wouldn’t dare allow to shepherd the flock because while they may teach the word, they don’t have the ability to shepherd a flock.

Now, I want to make another point here and that is that this is a gift, it is not an office. The New Testament knows no such thing as the office of pastor. In the sense of the president of a corporation, in the sense of a man who does all of the teaching of the word. The New Testament does not know any such man. It does not know any man who has the organizational control of a church. Now, if you’re looking at me and saying, “Well, Dr. Johnson, you’re our pastor.” No, I’m not. Not in that sense. The elders, as a group, this plurality of men, they have the oversight. No one man has the oversight. And things that are done in a local church should be done under the guidance of a plurality of men who have spiritual maturity, appointed by the Holy Spirit to the office of elder. There is no one man who has administrative control of the local church. That’s nowhere taught in the New Testament.

Now, someone might say, how did it ever arise? Well, it arose for two reasons: number one, men like to have power and authority. And if one man can have authority, you know, even in churches that don’t recognize a pastor, in that sense, if you search long enough and dig around deep enough, you’re liable to find a man who has just as much power, even though he’s not recognized as the pastor of the flock. In fact, you might even find, I know some churches I think that you can say this is true of. It’s not my opinion. It’s the opinion of a majority. If you dig around enough you can probably find a woman who controls the church. And so, you see, there is a lust for power in the part of every one of us and we all have to guard against that. Now, that’s one reason that we have men who have assumed the right to direct the church. The gift of pastor-teacher in many churches has largely swallowed up all of the other gifts.

Now, the other reason is that we, who sit in the pew and listen to their teaching, allow them to do it. Because, we say, isn’t it easier for Bill to do it? Or, isn’t it easier for John to do it? And so, we say, let him do it. And, pretty soon he is doing it. Maybe, in the beginning, he didn’t want to. But, we’ve allowed them to do it, and so, we’ve given them authority because we don’t want to take the interest and responsibility ourselves because it might keep us from our work or it might keep us from our play. So pastor-teacher.

Now, I think, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer was a great teacher. I don’t think that he had the gift of pastor-teacher, myself. But, he was one of greatest teachers I’ve ever listened to. When the New York State Board of Regents came twenty-five or thirty years ago came to Dallas to accredit Dallas Theological Seminary, they sent a man who was thoroughly qualified academically into our classes. And, I was a student at the time and he sat in our classes and listened to the teaching. Well, Dr. Chafer was the one man on the faculty who didn’t have a seminary degree. And when the report was written up and the seminary was approved for accreditation, and the report was then made public to the institution, it was to the chagrin of some of the faculty that Dr. Chafer was the one teacher

that was singled out for special commendation; as a man who, not only was an excellent teacher, but had his material wonderfully in hand. And, there was a paragraph devoted to his ability as a teacher. Well, that was a teacher made by God. And so I think we can say, that these spiritual gifts are not made by seminaries. So the fact that a man graduates from Dallas Theological Seminary does not mean that he has the gift of utterance. It does not mean that we give him a Master of Theology Degree that he, therefore, is qualified to serve as a pastor-teacher in the flock or as a teacher. Gifts are given by God. Remember that. They are given by God and, consequently, that is the ultimate test.

C -The gift of exhortation. Romans, chapter 12 in verse 8. Now, Romans, chapter 12 in verse 8 says “Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation:” Now, teachers, it has been said, lay out the truth. That is, they explain the truth for us. Exhorters lay it on us; that is, they really press on the truth and make us feel that we must obey that truth that has been given by the teacher. You know, it’s possible for a teacher to so give out the truth that we say, “My the truth is wonderful,” but we go out and we don’t have a great sense of desire to do it; or sense of necessity to do it. Well, the exhorter is one who impresses upon us the necessity of doing the truth, and he consoles us, he builds us up in the faith, he strengthens us, he urges us, he encourages us; all of these are thoughts that are bound up in the word, “parakaleo” which is the Greek word used for exhortation.

I think Andrew Murray had a great gift for exhortation. I don’t believe everything Murray wrote in teaching because there are some things I think he was unsound on. But, you know, I discovered when I started reading Andrew Murray’s books, many years ago, that I very often finished by reading on my knees. There was something about that man that made me want to get down on my knees and pray that God would make real in my experience the things that he was talking about. And I defy some of you to read Andrew Murray’s books like “With Christ in the School of Prayer,” or “The Holiest of All: the Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews.” I defy you to read fifty pages in it without getting down on your knees and praying. If you don’t you better come and see me and

let’s talk about your becoming a Christian. Because, I don’t believe it’s possible for you to read literature like that, he had such a tremendous gift of exhortation, without getting down on your knees and praying.

So frankly, many years ago, whenever I wanted to get in the mood for prayer I frequently would pick up his book because I knew I would end up there on my knees. I think I ought to get it out again, a few of them, too. “The Holiest of All” it’s an exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews but Andrew Murray has many books and all of them have the same flavor.

Capital D - The gift of ministry. Romans, chapter 12 in verse 7, says “Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering.” Now, from the context of this 7th verse of the 12th chapter, it seems that this is not teaching. We’re inclined to use the expression; “Bill McRae ministered the word to us in the Sunday School class on Sunday morning.” Or, “Bill McRae ministered the word to us in the preaching service at 11 o’clock.” And, that’s all right. Ministry means service. But it’s evident from the context here that the ministry here is not the teaching of the word because the very next clause says “Or he that teacheth, on teaching;” So the ministry, I think, here must be more general service. Now, that means that there is such a thing as the “gift” of ministry.

Now, I don’t like to pat anybody on the back, but you know, we have several men here in this group of Christians that meet here, that obviously have the gift of ministry; service. They serve on the deacons. That’s what a deacon should be. He should have the gift of ministry. Now, it’s just as important as teaching in the sight of God. It’s little noticed but no teaching of the Scriptures could ever effectively be carried on without people who have the gift of ministry or service. And I would think that normally, deacons should have this. But, let me warn you. There is no text that says this. Just like there is no text that says there is a temporary gift. But I think, that’s a reasonable assumption that the deacons should have the gift of ministry.

E - The gift of administration. Romans, chapter 12 in verse 8 “He that ruleth, with diligence.” Now, that’s the word for administration, the gift of ruling. Now, administration is a gift that is referred to more than once in these sections. And, when you read the four passages, you will find that this gift is referred to in more than one of them. It was an important gift. What is the gift of ruling or the gift of administration? Well, the gift of administration is the ability to lead. Some people have the ability to lead and some do not. The ability to lead is not necessarily given to a man who has the greatest intelligence. Some men have brilliant intelligence but they are not very good leaders. Some men have ordinary intelligence but they are great leaders.

Now, an ability to lead, I think, is important and it’s necessary for the gift of administration. I don’t know, I have not done a great deal of thinking about this and my thoughts are not very deep and profound, but it seems to me that the essence of the gift of ruling or the gift of administration is the ability to think impartially. The person who can think impartially and act impartially is the person who soon creates confidence in his leadership.

I think Dr. John Walford, at Dallas Seminary, is one of the greatest administrators I’ve ever known. And you know, I’ve thought that for a long time but several businessmen that have been associated with the seminary in recent years have said the same thing to me. And it’s remarkable that a businessman should come in, a man who has simply been a teacher and preacher of the word, for his administrative ability. He has a remarkable ability to administer impartially, and he is a great leader for that reason.

Administration. That, by the way, that term used here “He that ruleth” is the term that is used of elders. For example, 1 Timothy, chapter 5, verse 17 says “Let the elders that rule well.” That’s the word translated “rule” here, administrate. “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.”

That text, by the way, shows that some elders labor in the word, some do not. In other words, an elder may also have the gift of teaching or the gift of pastor-teacher

F - The gift of giving. Romans, chapter 12, verse 8, here we read “Or he that exhorteth on exhortation he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.” Now, isn’t it strange that “giving” should be referred to as a gift? Why, I thought every Christian was expected to give as God led him in his giving. Second Corinthians, chapter 9 in verse 7 says “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” That means that if the offering plate is ever passed and you feel, grudgingly that you ought to give five dollars, just keep your five dollars. It won’t do you any good. It won’t do the church any good, either, because God has promised to take care of the church. So just keep it in your pocketbook.

But, you’ll notice that it says, “Every man.” Now, that means that every man is potentially a giver. Well, what is the gift of giving? Given to only some? Well, it’s obvious this is not an ordinary Christian giving, this is extraordinary Christian giving. This is the unusual ability to give large sums of money. Now, you know it hurts to give a little bit. But it really hurts to give a lot, doesn’t it? Now, this is the ability to give a lot. I’m not saying it doesn’t hurt. It may hurt them even more but they have the ability to do it. I don’t know who to use as illustration because I only know certain people who give large sums of money. I know it has been said that J. F. Jarman, the famous shoe-man, gave over two million dollars to Christian missions. Well, I would call that the “gift” of giving, if that’s true. It is said, that R. G. LeTourneau used to give about 90% of his income to the Lord’s work. Well, if that’s true, I would call that the gift of giving. So the gift of giving.

I would think that these two men of whom I’m going to tell a story now did not have a gift. There’s a story of a Jewish man and a Scottish man who were traveling together because they were traveling salesmen. And they arrived in a community rather late one afternoon. And, they tried to make a few calls but it turned out that everybody

had closed up their shops because there was a revival meeting going on in the town and they wanted to be sure and be there. And so there was nothing to do that night and well, these two men, the Jew and the Scot, decided to attend the meeting. And they arrived a little late so the ushers ushered them down to the front in this big tent where they were holding the meetings. And just as they sat down, the evangelist got up and he said, “I’m expecting a large collection tonight. And every man that I look straight in the eye, I expect to give five dollars.” And, with that he looked at the Jew. And the Jew fainted. And the Scot carried him out. [Laughter] Now, I would think that those two men did not have the gift of giving.

Now capital G, that was to wake up two people who were sleeping. [More Laughter] The gift of faith, 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 9. Now, here, Paul says “To another faith by the same Spirit.” Now, again, we must ask the question. Why is “faith” referred to as a gift? Does not every Christian have to have faith? Why, of course, we have to have faith in our Savior who died for us in order to be saved. And, we have to live by faith in our Christian life. What then is “the gift of faith?” Something reserved for some people but not all? Well, the gift of faith, I would think, is the gift of the ability to trust God in large and unusual ways. I don’t know how to describe it except to describe it in a Scriptural way. Notice, chapter 13 and verse 2 “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.” Seems to me that may be what Paul refers to when he speaks about the “gift of faith.” It’s the unusual, out of the ordinary ability to trust God.

It’s the kind of faith that George Mueller had, I think. George Mueller, you know fed thousands of orphans. At one time, he had four thousand orphans in the Bristol Orphanage. And they never made a single appeal for money; not one letter was ever sent out. No prayer letters were sent out. He never even let anyone know what the needs were and four thousand orphans were dependent upon God through George Mueller.

But God never allowed them to starve. If you’ve ever read the story of George Mueller that’s a tremendous tonic to faith. The orphans, they sat down at a table and there was nothing on the table. And there would be a knock on the door and the local bakery or the local grocer would say, we had a lot of things left over and they’re going to spoil if we don’t get rid of them. And the children were fed. That man had the gift of faith. Dr. Chafer used to say he never had the gift of faith. He read the story of George Mueller and he decided he was going to live like George Mueller and he said he almost starved to death. [Laughter]

So I think Hudson Taylor also had the gift of faith. He went out to China and as a result of the faith of that one man it wasn’t too many generations before there were six hundred missionaries in China through the ministry of that one man, Hudson Taylor. By the way, who also conducted the affairs of the China Inland Mission in the same way. They never appealed to anyone for anything. The gift of faith.

Now, roman II - The design of them. Capital A - The edification of the Body of Christ. You’ll notice all the points of my outline begin with the letter “D.” As the colored brother said, “All my points are alliterated.” [Laughter]

Now capital A - The edification of the Body of Christ. Will you turn with me to the Ephesians passage Chapter 4, verse 12 through verse 16. This is one of the greatest passages in all of the New Testament on spiritual gifts and their purpose in the local church. Here we read, after saying, “He gave some, apostles,” verse 12 of Ephesians 4.

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

Someone has described a football game as seventy-five thousand people desperately in need of exercise cheering on twenty-two men passionately desirous of rest. [Laughter] Now, you know, that is like the Christian church because one man stands in

the pulpit, wrongly. Given into his hands is all the ministry of the church. We never meet as the early Church did in which there was opportunity for different people to ministry the word to the whole body of Christ. One man, who is being cheered, who is passionately desirous of rest, often, being cheered on by the members of the congregation who desperately need Christian exercise, looking to him to do all the work that they ought to be doing. Now, we don’t have time to talk about all of the details of this passage. It could take us, literally, two or three hours, because it’s so important.

But, I want you to notice one simple thing that this text says that the gifts were given “for the perfecting of the saints.” Now, I’m going to translate this as it should be rendered in the Greek text, “for the perfection of the saints, unto a work of ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ.” Now, notice, it is not said that these gifts were given for three purposes; that is, that the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastor-teachers should do three things, perfect the saints, do the work of the ministry, edify the body of Christ. It is said, rather, and I recommend that you read today’s English version “Good News for Modern Man” which has a good rendering of this, or The New English Bible, they are both true to the text here. It says, that these men are given “for the perfecting of the saints, unto a work of ministry.” And, the point of it is that the saints should do the ministry. In other words, the gifted men are given to perfect the saints in order that “they” may do the ministry and that through them, the body of Christ may be built up.

You know what that means? It means that if I have the gift of teaching, for example, I am to teach you so that you do the work of the ministry in order that the whole body be built up. Not I, to do the work of the ministry. I equip you. I perfect the saints so that “you” may do the work of ministry. Now, that’s an entirely different concept of the local church. It means that the gifted men are simply agents of God to equip “you” to do the work of ministry. Now, the end of that is the “edification of the body of Christ.”

That’s the ultimate design. The intermediate design is that we should grow as we read in verse 13.

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;” [That’s the ultimate] “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;”

Now, I wish I could talk about this. I cannot. All I want to say here is, the ultimate design of the spiritual gifts is the edification of the body of Christ. The intermediate design is spiritual growth in the body that we grow from childhood to adulthood. Now, what are the marks of childhood? That we “henceforth be no more children.” Have you ever thought about that? What are the marks of children? Well, I think about it all the time because I have a grandchild. As a matter of fact, I have several grandchildren. Not only that, but I’m living to Cathy Burns and she has a little son. And, I have wonderful opportunity to observe children. And, here are some of the marks of children. First place, they lack stability. Any new sight or sound is sufficient to change their purpose. Nothing holds their attention long. They’ve got to have some new attraction all the time. That’s a sign of babyhood in Christian things. Or, they are easily deceived. Grandfather can play more tricks on his grandchildren; I can fool them every morning.

In fact, for a long series of times, I told them every morning. They came down every morning, religiously, to find me in the bed. That was the great entertainment everyday. And, I fooled them for morning after morning after morning. Children are easily deceived. The cults and false doctrines make hay among the children of the family of God. They lack a sense of proportion. They dispute over the smallest little toys to the

neglect of weightier matters. You’ve never heard one yet who comes and says, “Granddaddy, why are we here on this earth?” They don’t say things like that when they are children. But, they can fight over a toy. “That’s mine!” “No, that’s mine!” “No, that’s mine!” And, pretty soon, they’re hitting each other over the head, you know. And, my children do that. I know yours do. The range of their life is selfish. Have you ever noticed the pronouns that children use? It’s “I, me mine.” I caught myself the other day. “Do my grandchildren ever speak of me?”

Another characteristic of children is their “all-knowingness.” Have you ever noticed that? They are provokingly infallible. They can tell you the deepest of things with the most absolute certainty because Daddy said it or Mother said it. And, that’s a characteristic of young Christians. They’re infallible, often, in spiritual topics. They have revealing companionships too, the dog, the cat, the frog, the lizard, the snake. And Christians have the same kind of companions too. I don’t want to look in the pockets of some of the children. And, some of you have boys as little children; I feel sorry for you. They also have a lack of reverence for age and authority. I told my DTS students that a lot of them were babes too, according to this standard. “Trust no one over 30.”

I heard of a person, a father, who said in these days of progressive education, who said he, “never struck his child any more except in self defense.” [Laughter] But, we’re living in an age in which there is no reverence for age or authority. Well, that’s a characteristic of youth; it’s a characteristic of immaturity. And, of course, they are alert to pleasure and they are dead to duty. The most successful way to get a child to do anything is to persuade him it is play. And the Tom Sawyer method is what is used in most Christian work today. Get the Christian’s to think it is fun to do it and they’ll do it. But, they won’t do it because they think it’s taught in the Bible or it’s their Christian duty to do it. That’s a sign of immaturity. All of these things are signs of immaturity.

“The Permanent Gifts (the Holy Spirit in Spiritual Gifts)” by S. Lewis Johnson
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Now capital B - The glorification of God. This is the, I think, the greatest of the designs of the spiritual gifts. Peter says, in 1 Peter, chapter 4, in his passage on spiritual gifts, he says in verse 11.

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

In other words, the ultimate aim of the ministry of spiritual gifts is the glorification of God.

Now roman III - How may I know that I have a spiritual gift? After all, we are interested enough and it’s proper, I think, to be interested enough to ask ourselves, how may I know what spiritual gift I have? Well, I’m going to suggest that, first of all, you should have a desire for the gift you have. You might put 1 Corinthians, 14:1, here.

In other words, I don’t think anyone who has a spiritual gift, as a rule, comes to understand that he has that spiritual gift without the creation within him by the Holy Spirit, of a desire along those lines. If God, for example, has given you a gift of teaching, sooner or later you are going to have the desire to teach. If you have the gift of ministry, you will have the desire to help. If you have the gift of administration, God will implant within you the desire to lead. Now, the fact that you have the desire to lead does not mean that you have the gift. The fact that you have the desire to teach doesn’t mean that you have the ability to teach. But, it should be one of the characteristics of the possession of the gift.

Second, there should be the recognition of others that you have your gift. For example, if I have the gift of teaching, it should be the realization of others that, at one point in time, as they hear me that I have the gift of teaching. If I’m the only one who

thinks that I have the gift of teaching, I should be very, very doubtful of my possession of that gift.

Now, let me give you a word of practical advice. If, for example, you think that you have the gift of teaching, don’t believe the first twenty-five or fifty people that tell you that they enjoy the little ministry of the word that you gave. Because, unfortunately, most Christians are not honest. [Laughter] They don’t come and tell you the truth. They don’t really come and say look, “You got up and preached but, frankly, you were very, very poor. I would suggest that you never do it again.” [More laughter]

They don’t do that. They come and say, because, you see, that would be an embarrassing situation, they don’t want to face situations like that. So, they say, “Nice work.” And so, what does the fellow do? He goes on and prepares something else. Well, that’s the worst thing that you can say to a person. Furthermore, I think, that honestly at times it might be good to seek them out in order to prevent that. It would be a great service to God and a great service to the saints, to go to the brother and say, “Look, I know that you may have a desire along this line, but I’d just like to say that I listened to you tonight and, frankly, it was difficult to listen to you and I don’t think I got anything out of it. And, I would say, I know from the Bible that you do have a spiritual gift. But, I don’t think it’s that. And, I just pass that on to you for your evaluation.” [Laughter]

Now, I want to tell you something. I’ve done that with people. I’ve done that with people. I felt I was doing God a service when I did it. And you know, occasionally, one time, I remember, a fellow said, “Well, you know, I appreciate you saying that because I really wasn’t sure I should have said that.” But now, a lot of you have been attending classes this past week in which you were taught to be honest. Well, this is one way you can carry it out, to be honest. So I don’t think, really, that you are doing God a disservice when you do that. You are doing the Church of God a great service when you do it.

So there should be a recognition on the part of others and one of the worst things you can do is encourage someone in doing something in which it is obvious that he doesn’t have the gift. One of the worst things you can do.

Now, in our church, when we have freedom for ministry, I’ve heard some men get up, occasionally, who didn’t communicate anything. They were, really, a bore. They did not edify anybody. And it really has hurt me to hear some people go up and say to them, “We appreciated hearing from you tonight.” Because, it was so wrong to say that, I felt.

Now, after all, I’m only one person. I can be wrong. But, if that’s the general opinion, and I know it was in this case then, I think, to be honest before God, we have to do that. As bad as it may be.

Then also, I think, finally, there should be some evidence of divine blessing on the exercise of the gift. Now, this is very closely related to what I’ve just said. What I mean is that if, for example, you have the gift of evangelist, you think, and you have exercised your gift. And you have others come and say, “I think you have the gift of evangelism,” it’s only proper to expect that there should be some people who find Jesus Christ through your ministry. Now, that doesn’t have to happen every time you preach the Gospel. But, that should be the general thrust of your ministry.

If you are preaching the word, constantly, thinking you have the gift of evangelist, and no one is coming to Jesus Christ as Savior, then, I would think, that you should not be so sure that you have that particular gift. So to discover your own gift I think, these three things should concur. You should have a desire for it, there should be a recognition on the part of others that you have it, and there should be evidence of divine blessing on the exercise of your gift.

Now, Dick Clark is not here. I don’t know whether he is listening or not. But, he has the gift of ministry. It’s evident. He has taken it upon himself. He has, I hope he has a desire to do this, but I cannot speak for that. He must have or he wouldn’t do it. I recognize it; others recognize, too. And, we are blessed through the ministry of that man

and others who have ministered their gift of ministry. Now, it’s possible to have more than one gift. We shall talk about that also.

Time is up. We have to stop. Next time we are going to talk about the temporary gifts. We’ll go into tongues and healing. Tonight, we will not have a question and answer time. I’m sorry. Save you questions for next time. We’ll probably have more next time, anyway. But, I have guests at home and I think I ought to get home to be with them for awhile.

Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word and for the truthfulness of it. And we pray that as we study spiritual gifts that we may learn what our gift is and effectively minister it to the edification of the body of Christ and to Thy glory in the power of the spirit.

In this we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.