



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Ephesians 4:7-12

“The Work of the Ministry, part I” -- TRANSCRIPT

We are turning to Ephesians chapter 4 verse 7 through verse 16, and our subject is the work of ministry. The Apostle writes in Ephesians chapter 4, in verse 7:

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”

That verse, incidentally, means simply that he gave some apostles, and he gave some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, it does not mean that he gave some people these and some people the other.

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 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 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; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

The work of ministry.

If you were to be asked, “What is your conception of a minister in a church?” What would be your response? Well I dare say that, while in Believer’s Chapel there may be some understanding of these things, in most churches if they were asked, the members, “What is your conception of the minister of your church?” they would reply in words that indicated they thought he was something like an administrator of the congregation, like a president of a corporation. Some would say, well, he’s a servant of the people. Others would say he’s an evangelist. And still others would say he’s someone who will comfort us when we are in difficulty.

What is your conception of your part in the ministry? If that question were asked, I would guess that in most of our churches we would say something like, “Well, I am supposed to be a financial supporter of the work of the ministry. I’m supposed to be a financial supporter and a moral supporter.” Still others might say, “Well, I’m expected to be an advertiser of our congregation and bring in others, so that they might hear the ministry of the minister.” Still others might say, “Well I’m to be all of these things, but I’m particularly to be a prayer warrior.”

The answer to these questions is found in Ephesians 4 verse 7 through 16, but it’s quite different from the average conception that exists in the churches of the United States of America. The argument that the Apostle has been giving us in Ephesians to this point is something like this. His theme might be called “The One Body Truth.” He’s been speaking about the church. He’s been talking about how it is the result of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle has been speaking about how as a result of the ministry of Jesus Christ, both Jews and Gentiles are now bound together to him in one body, composed of Jews and Gentiles, and, now, contrary to the situation in Old Testament times, the Gentiles are fellow heirs of the same body, partakers of the promise of Christ in the Gospel. So the Apostle has stressed that.

His method has been the method he has carried out in a number of his epistles. He has set forth the doctrine that he particularly wants to stress, and then with the beginning of the fourth chapter, he has begun his section of the epistle which he draws out the implications of the doctrine he has been propounding. We might call the first three chapters doctrinal and the last three ethical, or if we wanted to divide the last two, we could say the fourth, fifth and the first part of the sixth has to do with that which is ethical, and then he gives some exhortation with reference to our relationship with Satan in the last part of the sixth chapter.

What he has said is that there is one body, and it is to be actualized in a unity, and in a diversity. One body, Christ the head of the body, every believer a member of that body, and now we shall see that each of these believers has a distinct gift, and they are to function in the body in order that the body as a new man may accomplish the will of God which is set forth in holy Scripture.

One of the reasons, no doubt, that the Apostle has chosen the figure of a body is because our Lord’s own personal body is in heaven. It is at the right hand of the Father, and now the testimony which the Lord Jesus Christ has made possible by his saving work is to be carried on the earth by his body on the earth, the church. What the Holy Spirit is

seeking to do through the body of Christ is to do the will of God, as he was able to do the will of God through the second person of the Trinity.

Paul’s development here in the first sixteen verses of the fourth chapter – we’ve already studied the first six verses – is something like this: he gives us an exhortation in the first three verses, that we are to walk worthy of the calling by which we are called, in lowliness and meekness and longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit and bond of peace. And then he described the nature of that unity: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Marvelous presentation of the unities that exist in the spiritual relationships that are set forth.

Now, in verse 7 through 16, the passage we want to look at in the remainder of our time together, the Apostle tells us how the head and the body are to keep the unity. Someone has said that Paul passes in verse 7 from the unities to the diversities. Well that is true, yet it is not the whole truth. He passes through the unities, which he has just mentioned, to the diversities – each of us having gifts – but he also moves on to show diversities are to result in a marvelous unity, and a unity that actually operates in the accomplishment of the will of God.

It is true, the Bible says, that we are not left to own resources. He knows the body needs food to maintain life and walk, and so God cares for the body. And he cares for the body through instrumentalities which he gives to the body in order to see that the body has its necessary nourishment. Sometimes we do not realize that, even in the body of Christ, that we are like a body and we do need nourishment. We need the nourishment of the word of God. So God has given us gifted men with utterance gifts in order that we may be fed, because we are like a body, and we need to be fed.

Now let’s look at the first of the Apostle’s exposition of the ministry of the head to the body. He says, in verse 7, “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Now that’s a striking statement, because it means that every

single individual in the body of Christ has a specific spiritual gift. Do you know what your spiritual gift is? Are you sure that you’re ministering your spiritual gift in the body of Christ? That’s a legitimate question.

You ought to know what your spiritual gift is. He says unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Four chapters in the Bible are devoted to spiritual gifts simply in the listing of them: Romans chapter 12, 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Ephesians chapter 4, 1 Peter chapter 4 (two twelves, two fours; that’s easy to remember). And in those four chapters are lists of spiritual gifts. Some people contend that there are more lists than these; these are just a sample of the gifts. It’s much safer, however, to stick to the things that are stated in the word of God specifically to be gifts.

If you count them up, depending upon how you count them, because some of them appear to be the same gift under two names, there are from twenty to twenty-five spiritual gifts. They’re all set forth in the Bible. Do you know what yours is? If I were to ask you, “What is your spiritual gift?” Would you be able to tell me? Could you tell me your gift is the gift of helps? The gift of government? The gift of pastor/teacher? The gift of evangelist? The gift of giving? What is your gift? All of those are listed as gifts, even the gift of faith. Everybody has faith, but there is a gift of faith. What is your spiritual gift?

Now God has been very, very wonderful and abundant in his grace giving to us. He has given us magnificent spiritual gifts that we might be built up in the faith. And one of the great things that he has given us is not simply the living gifts but also the dead gifts who have given us the benefits of their work in writing. We can be, I think, perpetually grateful for a man like Martin Luther. Martin Luther was one of the outstanding gifts of God to the church of Jesus Christ. He appeared before Charles V and the Electors at the Diet of – well, we would pronounce it – Worms, the Diet of Worms (some diet, wouldn’t it be?) [Laughter]. But the Germans pronounce it “Vorms,” (that helps us out a little bit).

He appeared at the Diet of Worms in April of 1521. He refused the military assistance that was offered by Hutton. And when warned by Spalatin of the dangers that entailed, that were entailed in his trip to Worms, he nevertheless said that he would enter Worms despite “the gates of hell and the powers of darkness, and even if there were as many devils in it as there were tiles on the roofs of houses.”

He was asked two questions at the Diet of Worms: dost thou admit that these books were written by thee? as they looked at the books that he had written; wilt thou retract these books and their contents, or dost thou persist in the things thou hast advanced? Luther said he’d like to have a little time to think that over. Well, I can understand why he said that, because his neck was on the line. So he needed a little time to think that over.

Well, he came back the next day and when he was asked those questions he said, “Unless I be convicted by error, by the holy Scriptures, I neither can nor dare retract anything for my conscience is held captive by God’s word. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.” Martin Luther was one of the great gifts of God to the Christian church. He has given us many, many wonderful things and nothing greater than his book, *The Bondage of the Will*. If he never did anything but write that one book in answer to Erasmus, it would have been well worth everything that he ever did.

Now God has given us, each one of us, a spiritual gift. Maybe our gift is not as great as a Martin Luther. He appeared at a very critical time in history. We didn’t, perhaps, appear at the critical time in history that Martin Luther did. But nevertheless, God has given each one of us a spiritual gift. And it is our responsibility to know that gift, and to exercise it in the body of Christ. That’s one of the questions I feel sure you’ll be asked at the judgment seat of Christ: did you not recognize what your gift was? Did you not exercise your gift in the body of Christ?

Now Paul says that unto every one of us – incidentally, in all four of those passages it is stated, in each one of them, that a spiritual gift is given to everyone. It’s

almost as if he goes out of his way to stress that this is a universal provision by God for the body of Christ – unto every one of us is given grace unto the measure which is Christ. In other words, each one of us has a spiritual gift, and it is given unto the measure of Jesus Christ. Now, of course, the gift of Christ is given to us without any consideration of our merit. It isn’t given to us without any consideration to our previous capacity or asking. It is stressed in the giving of spiritual gifts that spiritual gifts are given according to the will of God. In other words, they are given sovereignly.

Now some of you have heard me the last couple of Sundays on Sunday, and you know I’ve laid a good bit of stress on the fact that spiritual gifts are given sovereignly, because that’s really the answer to the charismatic movement of today. For if we believe that gifts are given sovereignly, and if we can show from history that certain gifts have not been given through the centuries, as is easy to prove, then we have clear evidence that it is not God’s will that those gifts be exercised. It’s just as simple as that. We do not have any historical record of speaking in tongues, through the great mass of the centuries from the days of the Apostles.

Now since he gives gifts sovereignly, and they haven’t been given, well even a child can say, “Well, it must not have been his will.” And if it is not his will, then it is clear that spiritual gifts do not have anything to do with spirituality. They were given for service at a particular time for a particular purpose. But of course, if you cannot accept the sovereignty of God, well, you must live with your confusion, which a fundamental confusion is the confusion over the sovereignty of God. Everyone one of us has a gift according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Now. The Apostle continues with verse 8, “Wherefore”--what he does here is go back into the Old Testament, take a text out of Psalm 68 which pictures God as a triumphant sovereign who ascends on high and receives gifts among men. Now gifts are received in order to be given. Just recently when I was at Grace Theological Seminary, I walked in the first morning, since last summer I had given a course on the Old Testament

in the New Testament, and one student came up with a smile on his face and said, “Last summer, I noticed that you did not take up the use of Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4 verse 8 and 9.” And I said well, yes, that’s right. And he said, “Are you interested in the definitive work on that?” And I said, well, yes, I’m interested in the definitive work on that, but since he was smiling I knew what he was going to give me. He was going to give me his own paper [laughter].

And so, with that, it was an excellent little paper which I read while I was up there, and in it, he sought to establish something that others have sought to establish: that this 68th Psalm is ultimately a reference to the tribe of Levi, and the gift of the tribe of Levi by God to the Children of Israel to perform the service of God in the congregation. There is some justification for linking Psalm 68 with the gift of the Levites to the Children of Israel.

But regardless of whether that is specifically in view here, the reason the Apostle cites “wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” is to indicate whether there is a similarity between that Psalm in the Old Testament in which Jehovah is seen going up in the top of the heavens and receiving gifts in order that he might bestow them, because that is exactly what is happening now, in this age: the Lord Jesus, as the Jehovah, the second person of the Trinity, Jehovah the second person, Yahweh the second person, he has ascended to the right hand of the Father on high. He has received gifts from God, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and he has poured out these gifts among men.

So the Apostle sees an analogy between that and the Old Testament, between perhaps that and the gifts of the Levites and the Children of Israel to do the work of the Lord in the congregation, or at least of gifts to be received in order to be given to men. So, he cites the Psalm and makes the application in verse 9: “Now he that ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all

things.” And so, the Lord Jesus is like a triumphant sovereign, having accomplished his work, he’s ascended up on high, he’s received from the Father the gift of the Holy Spirit and he has poured out the Holy Spirit in this age so that every individual is indwelt with the Holy Spirit and furthermore, in addition, is given a specific spiritual gift.

You see, God is very, very interested in the spiritual provision of his body. “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” And the church, the body of Christ, will not exist and carry out its functions apart from the divine sufficiency of the gifts of gifted men and women to the body of Christ.

Now he enumerates, in verse 11, the gifts that he has specifically in mind here: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” Let’s look at some of these for a moment.

He gave apostles. Who are the apostles? There are individuals today who like to say we have apostles today. Well, in one sense we do have apostles, because there are two kinds of apostles in the New Testament. There are those who were apostles of the churches. They carried out function, such as carrying one gift from one place to another. Those who carried gifts to the poor in Jerusalem were called apostles, they were apostles of the churches, sent ones of the churches. And so in that sense, that non-technical sense, the word apostle is used in the New Testament: a sent one.

But when we think of the apostles, we ordinarily think of that term in the technical sense of those who were chosen by the Lord Jesus to be with him from the time of the baptism of John the Baptist on to his Resurrection. And they were the ones who saw him in his resurrection glory. When one was chosen to take the place of Judas, those qualifications were set forth: he should have been with our Lord and the Apostles from the time of the baptism of John to the Resurrection.

Now the Apostle Paul was a little unique, but he said, “Am I not an Apostle? Have I not seen the Lord?” And so he grounded his apostleship in the fact that he had seen the risen Christ.

The Apostles, incidentally, could have no successors. They could have no successors because we do not have appearances of the risen Christ today for apostles to see. That establishes an important principle. That establishes the important principle that there are temporary spiritual gifts. Again, the charismatic movement has failed to understand that fact.

In the non-technical sense, one might be called an Apostle if he carries out a function for the church. In that sense, he would be a sent one of the church. But these men, the Twelve, they were Apostles of Jesus Christ. That’s different. The Apostle is speaking of the apostles in that sense: those who could have no successors. They were given in order to be the ones who laid the foundation of the church.

That’s why the church’s foundation is laid on the ministry of the prophets and the apostles. Or to put it in the order in which the Apostle puts it here in Ephesians chapter 2: “and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” And the fact that he says apostles first and prophets second, indicates that he’s speaking of New Testament apostles and New Testament prophets.

So the Apostles, then, were for the laying of the foundation of the church. They had contact with the Lord Jesus. They spoke out of an authoritative relationship to him. They were his representatives. And they’ve given us, in the New Testament, the word of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, Paul says, he’s given prophets. What were prophets given for? Well, they were given for the stabilization of the church. The reason the church needed stabilization was that after the church came into existence in the early days, there was no New Testament to guide them. The New Testament was in process of being written. So, the church at Rome existed for a period of time without [the Book of] Romans. They existed for a period of time without other things that were necessary for them. But they met together. They had certain traditions that were given to them, as were coming from the Apostles. But they needed the guidance of the mind of God as they carried on their

work. Suppose we were to meet without a New Testament? Well, there are many things that we would be down on our knees constantly asking for the guidance of the Lord. So God gave prophets. Prophets were individuals who gave revelation. Not preaching. Not illumination; revelation. That is, truth directly from God. Revelation. That’s the purpose of the gift of prophecy.

Now, that kind of revelation might be predictive, or might be, simply analysis of the present situation, and the mind of God with reference to a present situation. In other words, as someone has put it, they were not only foretellers, but they were forth-tellers. That is, they not only had reference in their ministry to the future, but they also gave God’s mind for the present. In a local congregation, Agabus would stand up and say, “Paul, you’d better not do that; something’s going to happen to you if you do.” Or, there’s going to be a famine.

Now, we don’t have any prophets today. We have a lot of false prophets. But we don’t have any prophets today. And we have a lot of silly prophets today, who stand up in meetings and make little inane, senseless prophecies that don’t have any meaning at all. “Next Sunday, in Believer’s Chapel, there’s going to be great blessing”: that could mean anything. We have these prophets like the Delphic Oracle. When you write down what they say, it could be fulfilled in 4,000 different ways. There’s been not a one of them that would say: the Cowboys’ score will be 25 to 14 next week. Boy, if you could do that just one time, that’s all I’d want. One time. [Laughter]. It’s ridiculous. Really, it’s ridiculous. And when anyone speaks to you about in their church they have prophets, ask for some of their prophecies. Go ahead and ask for some of their prophecies. And when you get their prophecies bring them to me, too, because I’m collecting some of them [laughter].

The prophets were given in the earliest stages of the Christian church for the stabilization of the congregations that did not yet have the New Testament. So if there was need for the unveiling of truth that was not yet unveiled or available to them, the

prophet would stand up in the meeting – they met in an open meeting like we do in Believer’s Chapel; that’s why we do this in Believer’s Chapel, incidentally, not to have the prophets speak, mind you, but we do it because the New Testament sets this forth as the way in which the early church met – and so they would stand up in the meeting, and guided by the Holy Spirit, they would give their prophecies. And they were for the specific guidance of the congregation. The mind of God through revelation was conveyed through them.

Now, of course, as the New Testament came into existence, the need for the prophets faded out. And so down through the years, we’ve had no prophets. What does that tell you? Well, I’d like to ask every one of you individually. What does that tell you? If you believe in the sovereignty of God, if there has been no revelation given down through the centuries, what does that tell you? Why it says, as plain as day, it’s not God’s will for us to have prophets. So we don’t have prophets.

Now I cannot say that there might not arise some condition in which God might give us a prophet. In the future, he does say, that there shall be some prophesying, but only, specifically, in connection with the last days and the events of Israel’s seventieth week. So, prophets, for stabilization.

Evangelists, thirdly. We all understand evangelism. They were given for the expansion of the church. Evangelists were the equivalent of our missionaries. That is, they gave out the Gospel. Evangelists: they preached the *eupangelion*, the good news.

Then finally, pastors and teachers. It’s not absolutely certain that we are to render this pastor hyphen teacher, as we often hear people say. There’s some indication of that, but there is also some question about it. It’s possible that the Apostle has two gifts in mind, here: pastors and teachers. On the other hand, it’s possible – it’s very difficult to be absolutely certain about this – it’s possible that we have simply one gift, and we should hyphenate the two words, pastor-teacher, that is, every pastor is a teacher. Later on the Apostle mentions teaching separately in 1 Corinthians, so it’s possible to have the

gift of teaching and not have this gift of shepherding. But here, he’s talking about pastors and teachers, and let’s just say pastor-teachers, recognizing that from the standpoint of the Greek text it’s one of those cases where we cannot be absolutely certain. Pastor-teachers. That is those that shepherded the flock and taught the word of God.

Now the difference between a pastor-teacher, and a prophet, would be simply this. The prophet gives new revelation, or revelation. He gives revelation which is designed for comfort and consolation, as well as a look into the future. But the pastor-teachers, the teachers, they expound the revelation that has been given. They specialize in interpreting and expounding the revelation that we have.

Now we do not have additional revelation. Since the close of the canon, back in the 4th Century, so far as the human side is concerned; back in the 1st Century, so far as the divine side is concerned, we’ve not had any additions to the word of God. And the result is that teachers have given us exposition of the meaning of Scripture. Teachers are constantly being given. And since God is sovereign, what does it tell you? What does it tell you? I wish I could you ask again, what does it tell you? If he’s sovereign and he’s still giving teachers, well, that’s an indication that it’s his will that we have the gift of teaching. Therefore it has been a gift that has been given throughout the age, a permanent gift. Evangelists, likewise, a permanent gift.

So this distinction between a temporary gift and a permanent gift is something that is taught very plainly by the word of God, and confirmed by the sovereignty of God as seen in human history. So the teachers, the pastor-teachers, they take the Bible and give us an exposition of the word of God.

One of the greatest things that a man can do is expound the Scriptures. Sometimes people get up, it seems it’s almost an insult to God. They read a passage and say that’s my text, and I’m now going to preach. Maybe we’ll meet again, the text and I, and maybe not. [Laughter] Well a lot of times they don’t meet. I love that story, I’ve told it before – you’ll have to pardon me, some are here who’ve never heard it I know – of

P.T. Forsythe. He’s been called the Barth before Barth, a man with an amazing intellect and quite an influence on British theology in the first part of the 20th Century.

Mr. Forsythe came to the United States and he was giving some lectures in a theological seminary, and he sat in on a homiletics class, which is a class in how to preach. And this professor greatly impressed him because he had the habit of asking on Monday morning how each student had handled his text the day before if he had preached.

And he said he was in the class when the professor said to one of the students, “You were preaching last night.”

“Yes sir, I was preaching,” the young man said.

“What text did you take?”

“I took the text, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”

“A great text. Tell us how you treated it?”

He said, “I didn’t try to treat it. I took the two obvious points.”

The professor said, “What are they?”

“Well, first the greatness of our salvation.”

“Very good,” the professor said. “What was the second point?”

“Well, it was a little advice on how to escape if we neglect it.” [Laughter]

Well, Mr. Forsythe used to say, “I afraid there is quite a bit of preaching like that today.”

But pastors, teachers are to take the word of God and teach us the Scripture, what it says.

Now then, the Apostle turns to the ultimate purpose of the gift of the church, in verse 11 and verse 12, he says that these gifted men are given “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

Now what this really says – I’m going to put this in a sentence, and then I’m going to try and explain in the time that we have left – what Paul is really saying, is, that these gifted men, since the apostles are no longer with us, since the prophets are no longer with us, the only thing we have from them are things that they’ve written in the

Scriptures. We have the Apostles, and we have their words for us in the New Testament, and we have some words from the prophets there. So, their contribution is found in holy Scripture.

We do have evangelists, and we do have pastor-teachers, and Paul says that these gifted men have been given by the head of the church to the body in order that the saints, the members of the body, might be equipped for ministry. Let me say that again. He says these gifted men have been given to the church – some no longer given, but they’ve left their remains in Scripture – have been given to the church in order that the church might be equipped for ministry. Now do you understand what I am saying? I’m saying that the gifted men have been given to the church, the body of Christ, to equip the members of the body for ministry. You get it? The gifted men have been given to equip *you* to do the work of ministry. That’s right, you to do the work of ministry.

Now you might miss that if you did not read the Authorized Version correctly. Because it says in verse 12, “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of *the* ministry – that last “the” in the work of the ministry is not in the original text; it’s really for the work of ministry – for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Now there has been a great body of interpretation that has taken this to mean these gifted men have been given for three purposes. First, the preachers, that is the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, they’ve been given for first point to perfect the saints. Secondly, for the work of the ministry; that is, the gifted men to do the work of the ministry. And third, for the edifying of the body of Christ. So the man who preaches and teaches has been given to the church for three purposes, according to this interpretation: to perfect the saints, to do the work of ministry, to edify or build up the body of Christ. And the conception has been built up that the man who stands behind the pulpit on Sunday is to do the work of the ministry. And we are the ones who sit in the stadium and cheer him on.

Now, however, if you look at that in the original text, that is not the thought that the Apostle has in mind. These things are not correlative in the sense that we can put point one, point two, point three, the purpose of the gift of gifted men. But they are in series. The gifted men have been given to bring or to perfect or to equip the saints for a work of ministry, that is, equip the saints that they may do a work of ministry, that the body of Christ may be edified. So the gifted men have been given to by their teaching ministry to equip you, so that you may do the work of ministry, service, and as a result, the whole body, including the gifted men, may be built up.

So, my purpose is not to do the work of the ministry. My purpose is not to be the primary edifier of the body of Christ. My purpose is to equip you so that you may be able to do the work of ministry and that all of the church may be built up together. That’s what Paul is saying here. And that’s a magnificent conception. Because what it means is that it’s very important, therefore, for each of us to know the precise spiritual gift that we have in order that we may function in the body for the benefit of the whole body.

If there is something the matter in Believer’s Chapel, chances are it’s not because of the ministry from the pulpit, chances are – now that doesn’t mean there can’t be something wrong there, don’t misunderstand me, there can be, because those gifted men may fail in their duty just as much as we fail in ours, who receive their ministry – but the chances are that our failure lies not so much in the pulpit, as it lies in the carrying out of what the Apostle sets forth here.

We are to be equipped by ministry in order that we, the body of Christ, may do ministry so that the whole body may be built up. We, the whole body, we need the functioning of every member, just like a body, a physical body, needs the functioning of all members of the body in order to function properly in the physical sphere, so also in the spiritual sphere, we need the ministry of the whole of the body.

Now, that means then, of course, that we cannot have a real effective growth in the body of Christ here if each one of us, number one, does not know our gift; number

two, is not functioning in the body, ministering our gift for the whole of the body that together we may be edified. That’s a magnificent conception. And it depends not upon me, not upon the elders, not upon the deacons, not upon this body of men; it depends upon every one of us individually. We’ll talk about that next week.

But I want you, as I close because our time is up, I want you to notice here the importance that the Apostle places on the word of God. And I guess the best way to do this is to read something that a great interpreter said, because you can see that the work of ministry and the edifying of the body of Christ is dependent upon these gifts in which there is the giving forth of the word. The apostles and prophets who gave revelation, evangelists who proclaim it, and teachers and pastors who expound it, he said he could not exalt more highly the ministry of the word than by attributing to it this effect:

“For what higher work can there be than to build up the church that it may reach its perfection? They, therefore, are insane, who neglecting this means, hope to be perfect in Christ. As is the case with fanatics who pretend secret revelations of the spirit (modern day prophets), and the proud, who content themselves with the private reading of Scripture and imagine that they do not need the ministry of the church.”

May God help us to realize what ministry really is. It’s performed by all of us. We each have a gift. We each are responsible. The whole body is dependent of each one of us. May God help up to realize his purpose for us. Let’s bow together for a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for this wonderful exposition by the Apostle Paul of what Thou art doing for the church, the body of Christ. What a sublime conception of the body of Christ. And what a sublime conception of mutual unity and benefit, and yet diversity. We need each other in order that we may be edified, built up,

to the end that God, the triune God may be glorified. O God, enable us to accomplish
Thy purpose.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.