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Dame: "I'm sorry, but your finance company got here first."

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

I Cor. 12:1-11

I review just a word on the perverted gifts in V. 1-3, where Paul speaks of the ignorance of these individuals who had been listening to dumb idols, and had perverted the gift by calling Jesus accursed. Instead of Jesus as Lord.

The second thing we noted was the purposeful gifts - V. 4-7. There was a diversity and yet the same spirit. There was a difference in administration. And yet the same Lord. Diversity in operations but the same God.

The last thing that we were considering last Sunday evening, was the pageant of gifts beginning in V. 8-10. We had mentioned the gift of wisdom and the gift of knowledge. And the gift of faith that was able to move mountains. And we have touched briefly on the gift of healing.

It is not necessarily a deficiency in faith - that we do not observe miracles paralleling those of the New Testament. No one feeds 5,000 men and their families from a lad's lunch. No one raises from the dead, a man four days in the tomb. No one today walks on the water unequipped or unaided.

There are claims that are made today of miraculous cures. When they have been examined by Doctors, the pain disappears, things are again normal. The fever is gone. And there is no question here, as to the power of God to work a cure. The question is not what God can do - but what he does.

Often physicians have declared a case incureable. But they are not infallible

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men. It may be only that they do not know the answer however near or far it may be.

We find today however, in some of the healing services that people conduct before great crowds. We wonder why a few are healed. And perhaps why some faith healers get rich. Why do faith healers also die. Their mortality rate is 100%. Even the founder of Christian Science died.

" Sickness and death are realities. They come to us and we know there is medicine and there is no conflict between our faith and medicine. In medical schools and skills, we feel that this is a gift of God. If one rejects all of this and seeks to take a short cut in terms of healing, we would do the same thing about food. We trust God to sustain us. Not without food but with food.

Paul had experiences in this. And we today would say that it is not because of a lack of faith, that some are not healed and others are. But here is an affirmation that the spirit gives the gifts of healing. And it is the same spirit that gives wisdom and knowledge and faith.

To me one of the greatest sayings of Jesus is on record in Mark 9:23. If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. "

The late Dr. Smiley Blanton used to point out that achieving full mental health and wholeness - the important element was to learn to believe. With a believer, remarkable healings were possible. So said this doctor who had a strong

healing influence. He, himself, was able to believe. If one truly believed that God will heal him, and he will be the recipient of the healing grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, he has the quality that can make healing possible. And it can certainly be of important assistance in the effectiveness even of medical treatment.

In a military hospital back during the war in Southeast Asia, there was a surgeon that had a boy scheduled for surgery. In examining him prior to the operation the young soldier said - "I do not expect to live." I expect to die during this surgery. The surgeon said, son, I am sending you back upstairs. For you are in no fit mental or spiritual shape for this operation. You talk to God until tomorrow morning about it - and ask him to make you a believer. Then we will go ahead, and with God's help, we'll do a good job on you. For I, as a Doctor, cannot treat a patient. It is God who heals him. And that man was brought back the next day with a different attitude and the operation was successful and he fully recovered.

There seems to be built into many of us an attitude of doubt. That any great things can happen through the operation of faith. Yet the Bible tells us if we have the faith, as a grain of mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible unto us. This Scripture tells us that we do not need a big faith or a lot of it. Just a little will do if it is real. A mustard seed is a very tiny item indeed. So you do not require a lot of faith to receive the good things of God wants to miraculously bless you with. It is a matter of faith and healing.

Also, the Scriptures tells us while everything is possible to man, still nothing is impossible to God. There is always present the possibility that your faith may make you whole. So let us get rid of these doubts and these tendencies to rationalize

Something wonderful may happen to each of us -

PROVIDING GIFTS - V. 11

And Paul said that the holy spirit, the same spirit provides the gifts as he will.

The spiritual blessings ~~of the gifts~~ - wherever God's spirit is working, you may know that there is opposition, persecution, and abuse. Because you invade the enemies territory. So the enemy fights with the sharpest weapon. And his tactics are always the same.

In the case of Stephen, it was jealousy of the religious people. The religious people who lacked the power of the Holy Spirit. Often persecute those who have his authority.

Those endowed with spiritual gifts, arouse opposition when they declare with pathetic insight God's will. His exhortations and his warnings. Because sin is uncovered through such men. And the glory and the power of God is revealed. They are hated and they are persecuted, and they are ill treated.

Paul who possessed the gift of healing, was himself not healed. God earnestly repeated in prayer. 2 Cor. 2:12-7, 9. It must have cost him self something. I Tim. 4:12. He was disappointed. The responsibility for the right use of the gifts rest heavily upon those to whom they have been entrusted. You have a gift of the Spirit. The gift of discerning of the Spirits. It is not only an incomparable help but it is a great guide. The Apostles used this. Rev. 2:2. It helps in exposing a hypocrite that corrupt the church, or would divide the church. It helps people to come to reality. With a gift that separates them from others. There are those who would split a church. Those who would bring unrest. Or distress to a church. Those who would be dishonest in character. Or who would seek revenge in a

church. These gifts of discernment help people to guide in ministering to these. Is the stream drying up.

The reason why the gifts that have been provided by our Lord where his spirit may be found in our lack of using them, due to our lack of repentance. Our hidden backsliding. Our lack of preparedness. Surrender, and faithfulness in the church. That Christ no longer speaks.

Think about the history of some illustrations that help us to know that these gifts are for real.

1831 - Frederick Bodelschwinh was the founder of the work in Bethel, for epileptic children, Tramps and homeless. His work of mercy has become an example of similar institutions all over the world. Several of these, over 40 of these type of homes sprang up in Germany. His son, in writing the biography of his father, said, he had a burning love and mercy kindled by the Holy Spirit. Father never had the impression that he had done enough. That enough was happening at Bethel. Or that it was ever possible to do enough. Indeed everything that Christianity had accomplished appeared to him to be just one single cooling drop of water on the fevered brow of humanity. And again, his love knew no bounds. And so his field of work was also unbounded.

George Mueller, had the gift of faith. And in his testimony, he supported 2,000 orphan children. Without ever appealing for money. He received support only through prayer and his faith in God. God was greatly praised through his gift of faith. And countless other people had been encouraged by his faith. To tread a similar pathway.

Hudson Taylor, founder of the China inland mission was a man who had the gift of faith. It is known that he confessed that when he set out for missionary work in China, with a few pounds in his pocket. Otherwise, nothing more and nothing less. Than all the promises of God. His faith was not disappointed. God kept all of his promises and the history of his work. And God performed the mighty miracles. Again and again it was manifested to the world. That this work was led for God's glory.

When the work was 20 years old, it was in no way underwritten financially. And he faced great difficulties. But the challenge was great. He needed new workers. One of his missionaries proclaimed his goal of faith. ~~100 new workers~~ in the next year. At first, Hudson Taylor shared the general opinion that this was asking too much. A 100 new workers in one year - when the staff as a whole had not yet reached 200.

However, in a few days in quiet prayer, the spirit of faith suddenly came upon him. He dictated a letter home. We are praying for and expecting 100 new missionaries to come out in 1887. His eager faith, so flamed up, that his secretary said - if you showed me a photograph of the whole 100 taken in China, I could not be more sure than I am now.

And the year 1887, introduced by two days of prayer, actually ended with the last batch of the 100 sailing for China. All the work could be carried on. All of the expenses were paid and the great blessing of God reached an even wider circle. The dimension of faith, God not only displaces his greatness - but his fatherly love. For he hears the cries of his children - his gift of faith is always met with the gift of prayer. Men who have spiritual gifts must wrestle in prayer as mightily as God and Jacob.

Blumhardt had the gift of healing and miracles. He was able to help many find their way to peace and life. Whether they were insane or spiritual deranged. Or tired of living. He had a spirit that inspired people who cried out in their need and temptation, or struggle and darkness. Jesus is victor. Jesus, the conqueror, the lamb of God. A gift of blessing is promised to believers. They should always have prayer over the sick. James 5:14. Sick people in the congregation should really be brought to Jesus. Come unto me who labor and are heavily laden. And this includes the sick.

The gifts of the spirit are still at work in many different ways today. They are all the gifts of the one spirit. We are not to measure them by their misuse which has frequently occurred. In instances of false prophesy, or the misuse of the speaking in tongues. We can never turn around and say, keep clear of the Spiritual gifts. Or oppose them because we have found a false prophet. We need men today who can speak out in our generation as God commands. We need them who can tell us about the trends of our day. The importance of politics. And things of the immediate future.

What an awakening we can have today in the church. If what is amiss could be made clear by the lightning stroke of prophesy. What danger we do when we despise such a gift. And we do not stretch out our hands to receive it. We recognize him as the triumphant Lord in the midst of the church.

Not just one - but these gifts. Many of these gifts of the spirit must be in operation today. In the church of Christ.

How we need the discerning spiritual gift today. We live in a dangerous time today - the seducers, the hypocrites, and we view this in magazines and books that forsake even God. And they make sin, repentance, and grace and say God is dead.

We are called upon today to show our indulgence and understanding to those who live sinfully. Homosexuality, adultery, etc. are clearly labeled sin in the Bible. We today are told that we must not only tolerate them, but to accept them because of their unusual character. Even to the point of denying the existing sin. Because the coming of Jesus has exposed sin - and it can no longer be imputed they say. People are accepting this form of argument. And have become blind to the truth and are being led by error.

We need to have men today who are quipped with the gift of the discerning spirit. That we are exposed too - and the motives lying behind man's refusal. To recognize God.

Sometimes we know that it takes even more than the normal spiritual experience of a Christian to be adequate to discern his seducers - in the last days they will come and disguise themselves.

The occults, the new revelations, the formation of new sects - all of these are consistent with the Scripture.

Now all gifts that come from the spirit of God are manifested quietly, and with dignity, under God's control. I Cor. 14:33, 40. They do not attempt to draw attention or to cause a sensation. For Jesus said by their fruits shall ye know them.

We must ever remember that the provision of these gifts are for a purpose.

First, that we might be completely equipped as saints. For the work of God. Those who have been chosen out of this world to be under the spirit's will and guidance, will grow towards perfection.

Second, the purpose and the work of serving - literally for business of being servants. To make it possible to serve others. Christ intended this, and the greatness in the kingdom is not measured by the standards of the world, but by service. And the gift of the spirit does not come to create Lords but servants.

And third, the purpose was the edifying of the body of Christ. Yes, God has given these gifts of the Spirit for a vital growth in the believers who had been born in the kingdom.

They had been given that we might make him Lord of our lives. A Pastor of a very large church during the summertime slump said, it almost paralyzed him when he thought about the evening worship attendance and the youth activities not being carried on. And many people absent. With a wholesale exodus of pleasure seekers. But he said as he walked through the church building, he saw four juniors sitting in a room with a leader at the piano. And the hymn they were singing was "Have Thine Own Way, Lord". Have thine own way.

How many times he said, as he thought about the dismal failures, that adults, seniors surrender to Jesus and never make him Lord.

There was an old country church in which they had their business sessions on Saturday afternoon. And their preaching on Sunday. Most of the meetings were poorly attended. But there was a good man who always managed to be in his place. Someone asked him how, with the many duties about the farm that he found time to attend, with such regularity. His reply was, I settled that long ago.