

Romans 12:4-8

Sunday 12/13/2009

SEC: Introduction to Spiritual Gifts and God's Plan

I can see the great progression through this chapter. I want to read for you here, putting up in verse 4, coming down through 8, and then I will show you how this progression is working. You need to really get this in your Bible if you do not have it already.

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Now Father, we thank You and praise You, Lord, for all that You do for us. We thank You for those that are here today. Thank You for our church, for the Bible that You have given us. Lord, never let us lose our focus, Father, of what we need to do and what we need to be about. We love You, Father. We thank You for Your time, for the time that we have set aside today. May the Word of God enrich our hearts and may we leave here a little closer to You and our relationship and a little better understanding, Father, of what You have for us. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

As I said, certainly by now you can see the great progression through this chapter. In verse 1, we saw that God wants you and I to be a living sacrifice. We talked about that. We looked at it in great detail. In fact, that was probably one of the hardest messages in this section. In verse 2, we saw that God may want us to be a living sacrifice, but the problem is we can never attain that by being conformed to this world. We talked about that. The fact that once we get saved, we have a choice. That choice is, am I going to let God have my body? Remember we talked about the fact that what does God really want about you and me? God wants our body, and He wants our body to be a living sacrifice. That is what He wants. But we will never do that as long as we keep on trying to be conformed to this world.

Then we looked at the bottom of verse 2, but the thing that will absolutely guarantee it for us, that we will be everything God wants us to be, is to go through that process of being transformed by the renewing of your mind. We talked about that. Then last week, you will remember, verse 3, we talked about how to do that. You do this by getting saved. We know that by grace are you saved through faith. Then we talked about the fact that God gave each of us the measure of faith, just enough faith to get saved. With that faith, faith then becomes a process. That process is a process to strengthen your faith, exercise it. We talked about developing that faith through the things which you do for God. We talked about how that in the great chapter in Hebrews 11, that chapter of the Hall of Fame of God, that in studying Enoch's life, we talked about the four men

and the aspects of faith in your life, that it is impossible to please God without faith. Because faith is the essence of our spiritual maturity. You will only be as strong for God in what you do as you can trust God for in your everyday life. It is just that simple.

Now that is what we call in Bible study a progressive outline of a chapter. That is what we call progressively going through a chapter in the Bible and each section adding to the last and building on the previous verse or concept, and at the end it lays out a theme. That is what we are doing here. Today we want to see the next level. We want to see the next level that comes as we transform ourselves, and we want to see the aspect of the spiritual gifts in your life that God gives us.

SEC: God's Will vs. God's Plan

We talk a lot around here, in fact it is one of our discipleship lessons, I think it is lesson six. We talk a lot around here about God's will for your life versus God's plan for your life. I am not going to go through all that again today. We have been through it many, many times, and if you have been discipled here, you know exactly what that concept is. But many times we think that God's will and God's plan are the same. We have laid it out very clearly over the last couple of years since we have been teaching the Bible, and many of you have learned it, is that there is a big difference between God's will and God's plan for your life.

God's will will always be the spiritual side of things. God's will will never be what you do for God, but God's will will always be what you are inside for God. On the other hand, God's plan will never be what you are, but God's plan will be what you do. Here is how it works, real simple. As you, and this is the outline, progressive outline here, as you fulfill and transform yourself to become more like a living sacrifice for God, that is basically you fulfilling God's will for your life. As you do that through your spiritual fulfilling the things of God in your life, then He reaches down through you and He does His plan through your life.

Today we are going to see the next level of how it fits into your life. I have showed you verses one through three, basically God's will and how you get God's will on the inside. Now we are going to look at the practical side of it and show you how that God's plan comes into your life, and we are going to talk about the gifts that each one of you have today.

Probably at this time of year anyhow, hopefully your wife, fellas, has bought something for you for Christmas. You may know what it is, you may not know what it is. But the bottom line is this, and hopefully women, your husbands have bought you something or your significant other, your boyfriend or girlfriend, have bought you something for Christmas. As we sit here this morning, I can probably safely say this, in either scenario you have a gift for the one that you love, maybe multiple gifts. But you have taken the time to think what they wanted or what they needed and you went out and purchased a gift. You did it because you saw that maybe it was something that they wanted, maybe it was something that they needed. So you went out and you got a gift. They do not know what it is today, but you have a gift for them.

Well, God has some gifts for you. Those gifts do not just come at Christmas time. Those gifts are the things that are inside you right now that you do not know that you have. Those gifts are what

God, when He sees you and when you begin to fulfill God's will in your life and God begins to enact His plan in your life. That is when these gifts become part of the process because you need these gifts to be able to do the work that God has for you.

SEC: The Mark of a Successful Christian

A man said to me one time, and I have never heard a truer statement than this, and I am a collector of sayings. I probably have 800 sayings in one of my notebooks at home that I have just heard over the last 35, 40 years that I thought, man, that really says what I wanted to say. I have kept them. Once a year, twice a year, I will just take a day or two days and I will go down through all those sayings just to refresh them in my mind. I use them all the time. But I heard a man say one time that I have never heard anything truer than this. The man said simply this: The mark of a successful child of God, male or female, the mark of a successful Christian is the man or the woman who simply finds out what God wants them to do with their life and then simply does it.

That is so simple in its concept, but it is absolutely almost impossible for most of God's people to ever achieve because we do not even really understand what success is with God. We live in a world where the definitions have totally been changed. In reality, that concept is so simple, but it is one of the most confusing issues today in all of Christianity. The mark of a successful man or woman for God, Christian, will simply be this in your life and my life: finding out after you are saved what the job is that God wants you to do, recognizing within you the gifts that God has given you to get that job done, and then doing it.

I might add a great verse to you found in Ecclesiastes 9:10, which simply says this, and I think it is a great verse:

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Boy, that is a true statement. In other words, simply this, ladies and gentlemen, God puts you down here and you are like a tree, and everybody knows and you have heard me say this many, many times, and I am surely not going to belabor the point, you have heard me say many, many times, trees have their fruit bearing seasons. We are in December right now headed for Christmas. If you have an apple tree in your backyard, do not go looking for apples. The season for bearing fruit for trees in our hemisphere is over for a while, and there comes a time in your life when God puts you down here and you have a fruit bearing season. Your job and my job is to get tied into God as quickly as you can, give God everything that He wants, find out what the job is, what God's plan is for your life through fulfilling God's will for your life, letting God give you the gifts to get it done, and then getting it done.

SEC: Understanding Spiritual Gifts

Now I want to talk about that today. I want to talk about verse 6 which really pulls it all together, and I want to explain this process to you. Verse 6 says, "Having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." I want to talk about the gifts that God has given you. I want you to leave here today understanding first of all and clearing up the confusion because I think that the

concept of spiritual gifts is one of the most confusing things today in all of Christianity. I think it is absolutely, the average child of God has no idea, the average pastor today has no clue of what is going on and how this thing lays itself up. The average child of God has no idea how to even look within themselves to discern what their gifts are, and it is a cause of a lot of bad information.

As I said, I think that the idea of spiritual gifts today is one of the most confusing things that we have to deal with as God's people. This is not going to be the definitive on it because if you want the definitive chapter on spiritual gifts in the Bible, it will be 1 Corinthians 12, 13 and 14. It is not my purpose today to define all the spiritual gifts. When you get back there you will find where God breaks them down into categories, and that is how you really learn it. But I am not interested in that today. No, I simply want you to go out of here today understanding the process by which you find out what God wants you to do and then the process by which you get it done and show you how spiritual gifts fall into that.

I have actually seen churches, and probably some of you have been in these churches. I have actually seen churches that give the spiritual gift test. You will go to the church and they will have a spiritual gift conference and they will have some spiritual gift expert and they will talk about the fact that you ought to exercise your spiritual gifts. Amen. They will talk about the fact that you have got spiritual gifts, God has you, and how mysterious they are, and this guy, he has come up with the greatest program since sliced bread, and that is basically a test you can take, and that test is your spiritual gift profile. It will show you your primary gift which is the one you really need to work on, the one you have, and then it will show you maybe your secondary gifts, and the way you do it is you get a 200 question questionnaire, 200 questions on it, favorite color, favorite dog, seven spiritual laws, all those things, and then when you lay them out and you lay them all down, then you get the great key to it all. You get the cipher key, you get the thing that now you use this based on what you said, and it scores you and rates you, and at the end of the test because of what you wrote based on what the little key guide gives you, you can ascertain now what exactly your main spiritual gifts are. Oh, and what a great thing that is. Ladies and gentlemen, that is not the test for you to find out your spiritual gifts, but I want to give you the test today. I want to show you what it is. I want you to understand very clearly from the Bible how you realize what your spiritual gifts are.

Now let me just say this right now, right now if you are saved here this morning, let us start with this. When God looks at you right now, He sees you in the plan and the role that He wants you to fulfill in your life. You need to understand that. He does not see you in a t-shirt today or a shirt and tie or a striping shirt or a leather jacket. He did not see you necessarily in your spiritual growth, though He understands that. No, when He sees you and me, He sees you and me as the finished product. In other words, what He wants us to be. A lot of guys teach the fact that when you get saved you start doing things for God and you get your spiritual rewards, and at the judgment seat of Christ it is based on how you went through life. I am not sure if I totally agree with that. I think it might be like this. I think it might be the day you got saved God gives you everything you got right there, and then He strips it off as we go through life by the things we do not do, not the things that we do do.

To me, one of the greatest things I learned a number of years ago about the Bible is it helped me more than anything else because in life you have to make decisions. As a pastor, I have to make decisions every day. As a Christian, you have to make decisions every day as I do. We have to make decisions about people in our lives, circumstances in our life. We have to make decisions about everything in life, and for me when I look at the Bible, the Bible is a book made up of models, patterns. I learned that one time by going through the book of Hebrews where I saw that everything in the Old Testament was laid out by a pattern. Do you think Moses when he made the tabernacle? Do you think Moses when he made all the things that he did and all the furnishings of the tabernacle? Did you ever go back in Exodus 12 and 25 and 23 and look at all the intricate things that are in that tabernacle? When I used to look at that and I used to think, wow man, Moses must have been a smart guy. He just started out and must have been a great woodworker. He started out and put all this stuff together. Then one day I read in Hebrews, and in Hebrews 8, 9, 10, 11 as I was coming through there, I found out that Moses was not as smart as I thought he was. Moses did do all of that stuff, but you know how he did it? God gave him a pattern. Once I saw that, my whole life changed because then I realized that the Bible is not only a book that tells me what to do and not to do, but the Bible is a book that has a pattern in it for everything I know how to do.

Our little guys Thursday night, their favorite line was, "We speak where the Bible speaks and we are silent where the Bible is silent." Did anybody catch here what was wrong with that? I will tell you what is wrong with it. I do not know of anything the Bible does not speak to. I could take you into the Bible and show you why when you go out deer hunting and you have got to go to the bathroom, I will show you the procedure for you to do it. That is too coarse for you that you never had to be in a deer stand and go to the bathroom as well, I can tell you. The Bible even talks about stuff like that. I can tell you in the Bible and show you what kind of pictures you should have on your wall in your home and what kind you should not. I do not know anything in life the Bible does not speak to. You know why? Because the Bible provides a pattern.

No, I know what the first question is going to be on Thursday night this week. "Where does it say in the Bible you have got to go to the bathroom in the deer stand?" Because you guys are biblical, and I know you are a lot of deer hunters in here, and you would never want to violate scripture in the woods. I am sorry I am not more sophisticated than that, but you know what, that was the basest thing I could think of. I mean, you are going to shoot your mouth off to me and say the Bible is silent. The Bible is not silent on anything. It tells you everything. Models in the Bible, they are very important.

When God looks at you and me right now through His foreknowledge, right now the moment you got saved or wherever you are at in your walk with Him, right now through His foreknowledge, He sees in you the finished product. Now you may never get there. You may never fulfill it. You may never get God's plan in sync with God's will for your life, and we may wind up with a judgment seat of Christ without anything, but the bottom line is it will not be God's fault, and as He looks at you right now, He sees you and wants and has everything for you. But there is a process you have got to go through to get it, and it is not by taking some goofy test.

When it comes to the gifts that God has for you that He has given you that you need in your life to fulfill God's plan for your life, because the bottom line is this, Isaiah 55:11:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

God's ways are not my ways. His thoughts are not my thoughts. His ways and thoughts are higher than my thoughts. I think on one level, He works on another level. How in the world am I going to ever do God's work unless God gives me what I need? You talk about salvation being a gift, I have got news for you. He shows us the ministry and He gives it to you through the gifts that He has made available for you and me to do the job.

SEC: Gifts of the Spirit vs. Fruit of the Spirit

Now let me just first of all let me define these things. The gifts of the Spirit. Oh boy. We hear a lot about that in Bible stuff. You can go buy so-and-so's book, "How to Get the Gifts of the Spirit." Oh, the Charismatics are bigger now. Oh, the gifts of the Spirit. Let me define the gifts of the Spirit for you. The gifts of the Spirit in the Bible will always be the power of God in your life to do what God wants you to do. Plain and simple. It is real easy. Spiritual gifts in the Bible will always be the power of God in your life to do whatever God has called you to do. Plain and simple. Not complicated.

Ah, but there is another aspect that you never hear about. Not only is there the gift of the Spirit, but coming through your Bible in the book of Galatians, you will find there is something else called the fruit of the Spirit. You hear a lot today about the gifts of the Spirit, but you do not hear anything about the fruit of the Spirit in connection with the gift of the Spirit. Now let me define that. Where the gifts of the Spirit will be the power of God that He gives you to do what He has called you to do, the fruit of the Spirit will be the character of God. The character qualities of God that we need to put in our lives as we grow every day.

Now here is the bottom line, and this is where the concept of spiritual gifts in most Christians' minds just go out the window. You cannot have the power of God in your life to do what God wants you to do until you have the character of God in your life. That is the progression of Romans 12 so far. Living sacrifice. Be not conformed. Be transformed. Then the gifts come in. You will never have the power of God in your life until you have the character qualities of God in your life. That is why most of what goes on in Christianity is just flesh. It is just a lot of people wanting to play church and having a great time without understanding anything going on that what God wants them to do. Right now as we sit here this morning, God sees you and He sees me in the role that He wants you and I to fulfill. Your job and my job is to see the same thing and then get it done. It is that simple.

Now I want to say this to you. Sitting here right now, you probably do not see your spiritual gifts. That is the way it is supposed to be. I do not know any man in the Bible who recognized his spiritual gifts when he first got plugged into God. Jeremiah did not. Moses did not. Samuel did not. David did not. And Paul did not. I could go on endlessly. I do not think any man in the Bible ever, ever, when he first got plugged into God, ever saw exactly what God wanted to do. And

when he got a glimpse of it, it scared him to death. Our famous phrase, "Well, he made up his mind yet? No, he is still beating around the bush." That is Moses. That is Moses. Moses, God said to Moses, "I have something I want you to do." Moses argued with God and literally beat around the bush with God. You know why? Because he was afraid. You know why he was afraid? He could not see the end result yet.

SEC: Timothy: A Model for Spiritual Growth

Now how does this work? Really, how does this work? It works through a model. Everything I do in this church. Everything I do with you as an individual. Everything I do in my own personal life as best I can. I try to base it on a model. Do I always do it? No. Do I fail sometimes? Absolutely. But that does not change the fact that I understand that the model is in the right place. I have at home in some place in my files, 647 different models in the Bible of what things are and how they are to operate. And there are probably 60,000 more of them in there. Models are the key. Finding something when God said to Moses, He says, "I want you to make the tabernacle." Hebrews 8 and 9 says, "given by the pattern which God gave him." There was a model to it. There was a pattern to it.

Now what is the pattern? What is the model in the Bible for you and me? What is the pattern? What is the model in the Bible for you and me as a New Testament, born again, child of God to get through this process where you not only recognize your spiritual gifts but then you learn how to use them? Of course, the greatest model will be a young man found in Acts 16, and his name is Timothy. I want you to turn for a moment to Acts 16, and I will pick it up there just in the first couple of verses here, and we will come down through it and read some things about him.

Let me say this about Timothy. Timothy is for me, I cannot speak for you, Timothy for me is the greatest model I use in dealing with people, male or female. Timothy is the model. He is the pattern. I do not know if you know it or not. I know I never gave it to you from me because I use these things and some things I never give out because they are invaluable to me in defining and discerning where people are at sometimes. But I do know this, when I look at a young man or a young lady, when I look at a young man or a young lady from the potential of what they are going to do in our church, when I look at them as the pastor of this church and I look at them as a potential somebody who is going to be part of my ministry and who is going to pick up part of a mantle and going to do with it, there are seven things. There are seven absolute things in Timothy's life that you want to look for. Seven absolute things that when you start to see these things in somebody, you do not have to turn your notebook or page because I am not giving them to you. That would defeat my whole purpose. But I am telling you, there are seven things you look for in a young man or a young lady based on the pattern. And when you see those things in their life, even when they do not see it and they will not see it, they are not supposed to see it. I am supposed to see it. Paul saw it in Timothy.

But putting that aside, what I want you to see here are four areas in his life by which God revealed to him his spiritual gift, the plan that God had for him. I am going to say it again, God has something, a plan, a role for every one of you. If you are saved here this morning, there is something God has for you to do. You may never do it. You may never figure out what it is. That

does not change the fact that when He looks at you right now, He sees you in that role. And when you do not fulfill that role, that is when you grieve the Holy Spirit of God. But that is how He looks at it. And that is how He sees it. And every child of God ought to understand this model.

Let me read it here.

Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:

Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Now, I do not have time this morning to go into all of the aspects of this, but I want you to see some things about Timothy in four areas that this is what God. Here is a young man that started out just like you. The Bible says that he is from Derbe and Lystra. What does that mean? Well, Derbe was a suburb of the other city of Lystra. It would be a lot like you living in Raytown in proximity to Kansas City or Lee's Summit or somewhere like that. In other words, Derbe was a little south of Lystra, but within the same area of jurisdiction. Timothy started out just like you and me. I guarantee you, just as God sees you today, when young Timothy was down there in that early church, God saw him and God had a plan for him. God had a role that He wanted Timothy to play. When you study Timothy's life, it is a pretty incredible study.

Paul bumps into him when he comes through Lystra and Derbe on his second missionary journey. He gets introduced to this young man. Paul invites this young man to go with him. Do you know why Paul invited him to go with him? I am going to tell you right now before you even get through the story. Paul invited him because Paul saw in him the things that I see in some of you. Paul saw in him the character qualities that he knew it would take to sustain it into the ministry. Back then the ministry was a lot rougher than it is now. Those missionary trips which they were on and where they were going was filled with people who wanted to kill them. It was shipwreck, heartache, imprisonment, being whipped and beaten. It was not a piece of cake like it is today. But Paul saw in him, and we do not have time to get into this today, but the two great extremes in the Bible on this particular thing is Timothy and John Mark. Remember John Mark? John Mark is the guy that went out with him first and when things got tough he ran home to mama. But Timothy stayed with the stuff. Timothy is a great example. In time Timothy becomes absolutely invaluable to Paul. He even goes in the place of Paul sometimes like he did at Corinth and fixes the issues when Paul cannot get there. He becomes an invaluable extension of Paul's ministry. In every sense of the word, Timothy is a problem solver. He is not a problem-causer. He is someone who saw Paul, he saw in Paul some things. Paul saw in him some things. God put the two of them together for the work because God saw in Timothy's life a role to be part of what Paul needed. You know what he winds up being? He winds up being Paul's replacement. It is no

accident that 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon are called the pastoral epistles. They are called that because those are the men that started out with Paul that wound up being pastors. Incredible study.

You see the job of a church is fourfold, and I do not think fully sometimes you understand this. The job of a church is fourfold.

1. The job the church exists to get you saved.
2. Once you get saved, the job exists to train you.
3. The third aspect of the church is after you get trained and through your training is to equip you. That will be your spiritual gifts.
4. The fourth aspect of it is to send you back out.

Now that does not mean that when you hit a certain point here we send you to Africa. It means that you go back out into the world that you came out of, this time you are different. You know what is different about you? You now understand God's plan for you. It is a process.

Now let me talk very quickly about these four things.

- 1.) On-the-Job Training
- 2.) Responded to Responsibility
- 3.) Submitted to Authority
- 4.) Earned a Title of Leadership