

Revelation 12

Sunday 12/20/2009

Remember last week we continued on in Revelation chapter 12, and we were dealing with the aspect of spiritual gifts. I told you that Romans 12 is really not the definitive passage on it. If you really want the definitive passage to go through it, and we've done this on Thursday night on spiritual gifts, it will be 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14. This passage rather deals with and shows you how you and I, through a process, should be able to realize the spiritual gifts in our lives.

We talked about God's will and God's plan. God's will is the character of God in your life, building into your life the character qualities of God that make you what He wants you to be. Then, through that, God's plan gets interfaced, and you have the power of God in your life. You understand what God has called you to do. God gives you the spiritual gifts to get it done, and then you follow through with what God has for you to do.

We saw the great truth that God saved you for a specific purpose. There isn't anybody in this room who is a saved person today that God does not have a plan for. You may not have realized it in your life. You may not have done anything with it, but that does not take away from the fact that He had a plan for you and a purpose for you. As you grow in grace and faith, God will give you the tools, whatever you need. He will equip you. These are the gifts we were talking about for you to get it done for Him.

We saw the model, and I told you last week how important models are in the Bible, patterns that God has put in that if you and I have something we have to do for God, we have a clear example of it so we know how it's done. The Bible is not a book where God just gives you the verses and tells you what to do. Along with that, He will always give you a model that shows you exactly how it is to be done. They're very important in the Bible, and I can't overemphasize that enough.

God took a young man like He did Timothy with Paul. As Timothy, through his local church there, began to minister, God brought him up the ladder of spiritual maturity. In time, everybody in the church, the Bible says that he was well reported by the brethren. Everybody in the church understood exactly what God had for Timothy because he came up through the ministry itself, and God will always reveal and bring you up through that aspect.

I told you last week, and something that I really, really want you to focus on: don't ever limit yourself. I talked about the foolishness of thinking that you only have one or two main spiritual gifts. As you grow, God will give you the ability to do whatever He's called you to do. Maybe right now He's called you to do one thing because that's where you're at on the spiritual level that you are. But He has something else that He wants you to do down the line that is on another level. As you continue to grow, He'll continue to equip you and give you everything that you need.

You obviously can see the problem when you get the mindset that you're not going any farther and this is the only gift that you have. Of course, you never, and I mean absolutely never when it comes to Christianity and your relationship with God, want to limit yourself. You keep growing and you keep following the models that God has given you.

I told you last week that right now God sees you, whatever spiritual level you're on. You may have just gotten saved. You may have been saved for a number of years and just got plugged into the Bible. You may just be going through discipleship. You may be one of the ones that are going through some of the upper-level classes that we have for you to help you. It doesn't matter whatever spiritual level you're on, I guarantee you right now, you're going to see this before we're through this morning. Right now God sees you as that finished product. That's what He wants. When you got saved, He washed away all your sins. He doesn't look at you as a sinner anymore. He now looks at you as the finished product that He wants you to be. That's how He looks at it.

I think many times we don't understand that. We struggle with things every day, all of us. We have our good days and our bad days, and sometimes we end in victory and sometimes we end in defeat. The bottom line is simply this: when you understand how God sees you, it will help you get through every day of your life. God doesn't see you in defeat this morning. Now you may be in defeat this morning, but God doesn't see you in defeat this morning. God sees you in victory. God also sees you exactly the way the finished product should be. Your job and my job, through the process of growing, is to also see ourselves the way God sees us and then find out what God wants you and I to do and let God develop that.

Remember I told you that the job of a church is fourfold. The job of the church is to save you, train you, equip you, and then send you out. When I say send you out, I don't mean to Africa or India someplace, but back to your workplace, back to your family, back to wherever God has for you. It may well indeed be China or India, but it doesn't necessarily mean you're going to leave the country as soon as you get to a certain point.

I. Christmas and God's Gifts

Last week we saw the greatest strength in any church, and it's true of this church. The greatest strength of any church will be its diversity. I know this is the week before Christmas. Across this city and across this country, probably across the world, pastors are preaching their typical Christmas message, babies in the manger and all that stuff, and I'm certainly not against that because I understand the importance of all that. But I thought long and hard this week about this, and I was kind of torn on whether to put this back a week and give something that was apropos to where we are. I thought this thing through. I thought to myself, what is Christmas really about?

Your little kids that were up here singing, I know my little grandkids, they're excited about Christmas. They're not excited about Christmas because they're coming to grandpa or grandma's house or the fact that they got a tree up. They're excited about one thing: gifts. They made their list, checked it twice, and we all decided they're naughty or nice, but the bottom line is that's all Christmas is about to them. That's what this time of year is about. You go to work someplace, and you may pretend you're not paying attention, but when you get your paycheck right before Christmas last week, or maybe it'll be this week, I know what you're going to do. You'll be seeing if it's twice as heavy as it was the last time you got it to see if your Christmas bonus is in there.

Christmas is about gifts. If you don't believe that, husbands, just go through December 25th with nothing under the tree for the one sitting next to you, and find out how important it is.

The bottom line is this: if this is about gifts, and we're all excited about somebody giving somebody something, and I see you passing out your little things around here, I think it's great. But you know what? I can't think of a better message at Christmas time when we're talking about gifts than to talk about the gifts that God has for you today. I think it would be a tragedy if you were more excited about what's under that tree and that gift than the gift that God has for you to do what He wants you to do.

The Bible says in the book of Ephesians that He ascended. Before He descended, He descended. And when He rose up, the Bible says He gave gifts unto men. Right now, this morning, at this time of the year, that everybody is so excited about, that everybody is all into, let me tell you, God has some gifts that He wants to give you today. It's simply growing through the grace and faith through the ministry of this church, and then coming to the place where you realize what God has called you to do, and then recognize the gifts that He's given you. I want to focus on that today. We want to look at some other great concepts about spiritual gifts. It's Christmas time. This is your Christmas message. God has a special gift, gifts for you. Don't walk out of here today more excited about what your husband got you, your wife got you, or what you're getting your kids or your grandkids or what you got at work or whatever. Don't get more excited about that than the gifts that God has for you today.

Now, that's a good thing to me because I like presents. I like gifts. We're all that way. That's why you're not satisfied with your physical birthday, so you know what you come up with to get another present? Your spiritual birthday. That's the way we are. We want gifts. The way I look at it, when you get this gift and you understand what this is, it's Christmas every day because God has something for you and will give more to you every day. That's what it's really about. We all like that. We're all human. Nobody likes to be left out in the cold.

II. The Body of Christ and Diversity of Gifts

I want to read for you Romans chapter 12, and we're going to read some of this over again to put it all into context, and we'll come down through. Here's what he says:

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.

Now he's likening you and me as members of a body. Obviously, the example of that is very easy to see: your own body. Your arms don't have the same function as your hand. Your arm doesn't have the same function as your neck or your back or your legs or your toes or your fingers. They're all independently doing a separate job, but they've got to work together to be coordinated. You watch somebody, some of you guys who can play basketball very well or whatever you do in sports very well. Most of that ability is simply based on your ability to coordinate the things that you do. You are so coordinated in those areas because all your body is working together.

I used to like those basketball players that just could make. I mean, you watch them make a shot or go up under the deal, and I mean, they ramp it around, up under their leg and around their head, all while they're in the air, and then just slam that thing right down. That amazes me. If I would try to do that, I'd be in the intensive care ward for the next six months. But the bottom line is their ability is unbelievable. Yet I look at that and I think to myself, you know what, their body is in total complete coordination. That's the way a church should be. That's what he's saying here.

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.

In other words, it's the diversity that makes this church strong. Then he says this:

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.

Again, last week we talked about some of the different areas that you have in a church. To me, I told you last week, some of you have certain abilities. Others don't. That doesn't mean that down the line you won't have those abilities. It just means right now you have to be satisfied with where you're at and use the gift that God has given you. Hallmark coined the phrase, "the gift that keeps on giving." That's God. The gift that He gives you, if you use it right, it keeps on giving because it develops itself.

We talked about the different aspects, and in any given church at any given time, there ought to be a host of people that can do just about anything on any level. Some maybe can do more than others, but certainly everybody can do something. I talked about Moses last week, how Moses, when he was faced with the plan that God had for him, was afraid. He was afraid, but it wasn't a bad afraid. It wasn't afraid because he was ashamed or afraid because he didn't want to do it or what the people were going to think. He was simply afraid that he wouldn't do a good job for God. He keeps talking about the fact that how weak he is and how he doesn't have the ability, and God. He didn't understand that that's what God looks for. God doesn't look at you and me and pick us because we're strong. I really believe at the judgment seat of Christ, I personally will lose rewards simply because there were situations in my life that I was too strong in that I should have been. We can't let God do it through me instead of doing it myself. God doesn't look at you and me and pick you and me because of how strong we are. He looks at you and me and picks us because of how weak we are, because it's through our weakness that He wants to perfect not only your strength, but who He is in His strength. That's backwards from what we think because that's backwards the way the world thinks.

III. Defining Spiritual Gifts: Prophecy, Ministry, Teaching, Exhortation, Giving

Again, diversity is the key. Let me define some of these for you as we move down through here, and then I'm going to show you there are four things in here. We're going to talk about two of them today. We'll talk about two of them next week.

- Prophecy
- Ministry
- Teaching
- Exhortation
- Giving

IV. Simplicity in Christ

Now within this passage, there are four great key words. Like I said, we're going to talk about two of them today, and then we'll tie the other two into the last part of this passage next week. But there are two words that will make you or break you concerning the spiritual gifts in your life, the power of God in your life. God's plan versus God's will, character of God versus the gifts of God. Remember now, this is Christmas. Don't walk out of here today refusing the gift that God has for you.

I mean, would you like it if, how would you like it on Christmas morning? You went out and bought your wife something really nice. And she said, "Go over there opening up." You've been excited to give it to her. Or ladies, you bought your husband something and you just know he wanted it. And you went out and you got something and you wrapped it all up and you were anxious all week long just to give it to him. In fact, you wanted to give it to him before Christmas. But you didn't. And then Christmas morning, you stand there and you say, "Here, this is for you, honey." Or you say, "Sweetheart, this is for you." And she opens that up. You know, women do it one little leaf at a time because she's thinking she can save the paper for next year. Guys, we don't think that way. It's rip-roaring tear it open. She gets it open and you're standing there waiting for the anticipation. And she looks at it and she says, "That's nice." Throws it aside. What would you do? I'd take it back, get my money, and buy her something I wanted at that point. But you know, it would hurt you.

Now, nothing's going to happen that way on Christmas because we as human beings. I've had people give me the most stupid gifts in the world. My sister, and I love her to death. She's gotten better in the last couple of years. This year was really good. But she would get me cologne. Does anybody know how old British Sterling is? When I was in high school, that was a hot thing. If you smelled like British Sterling, you got the women. Three years ago for Christmas, four bottles of British Sterling. Where do you buy British Sterling today? I think she sent to England for it. Really? I mean, I don't know. Where do you buy British Sterling today? Have you ever seen it? Has anybody seen it in the last 40 years? I mean, I didn't want to use it. I figured I could keep it for another five years, sell it on eBay and get a million dollars for it. British Sterling. But when my sister calls on Christmas, and we call her on Christmas, she gave me a watch one year that

was broke. It didn't work. It didn't work. It didn't work. No, no, no, don't go there. It wasn't replace the batteries. It didn't work. You twist a little knob on the top and the hands would just go around, but they, you know, I mean, it was the only watch in the world that was right twice a day. She called that Christmas afternoon. Now, what did I say? Did I say, "This was the stupidest thing you ever gave me and I'm sending them back. Why in the world would you send me a broken watch? It's coming back tomorrow. Just send me the money." No. You know what I did? I said, "Honey, that was the nicest watch anybody's ever given me. I love British Sterling. I say old chap would make me feel great in the morning and I'd pip pip to you too." No, I said, "I love it. My favorite cologne." In other words, I didn't make her feel bad. You know what? Why is it that we'd go at such great lengths not to make our friends feel bad, our relatives feel bad, but we just don't give a flip about God when He gives us a gift and we say, "Don't need it." He has some gifts for us. It's Christmas.

Now, these two words here, or really two phrases, are the keys, as far as I'm concerned, and this is where every young man and young lady has to begin to grasp some of these things. It's part of the process. Now, the first thing he says in verse seven is this. He says, we're to wait on ministry. Now, we're going to talk about that in a moment. But the next thing he says is in verse eight, and he says, "do it with simplicity." Now, these are the two key words to your success and whatever God's called you to do. I'm just telling you right now.

I want to take each of these separately and define them from the Bible and show you how they fit into the plan that God has for you of you realizing your spiritual gift. Now, we're going to reverse them because I want to, for impact's sake, want to save the last one or the first one to the last. But the Bible says anyhow, the first shall be last and the last shall be first. It doesn't make any difference.

➤ Simplicity

V. Waiting on Ministry and God's Timing

He says, "wait on ministry." Not only are we to be simplistic in what we do, and it takes time to learn these things. That's why the second aspect of waiting on ministry is so important. Now, it's not saying, "wait till you're ready to minister." We know the key to growing spiritually is doing whatever God has called you to do and exercising your senses.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

But rather while ministering in your local church, wait on God and don't get in a hurry. Be patient, be long suffering. I think impatience is the number one thing. These are the two things. Everybody wants to make it more complicated, and everybody wants to make it faster than it can happen. When it comes to learning God, it takes some time.

One of the greatest models and examples in the Bible that will be Enoch. He walked with God for 300 years before God saw fit to bring him home. While you're ministering, you've got to come to the place that you realize that you have to wait on God. Now, I have a simple rule in ministry for me personally. I never, when people work with me in ministry, I have all these

requirements, some standards. There are some things that I tolerate, other things I simply will not tolerate. But making mistakes is something that will always tolerate. Chris and I talked about this yesterday. I can't really fault somebody for making a mistake in doing in ministry because I make them all the time. I think that anybody who doesn't allow people to make mistakes, I think that's too hard of a line. Because certainly somebody says, "I'm not going to allow you to make mistakes." Obviously thinking in their mind that they don't make mistakes and have to follow. We all make mistakes. But you know what I try not to do in my life? I never try to make the same mistake twice. That's the key. When we continue to make the same mistakes over and over and over and over again, you know what it's saying? We're not learning from our mistakes. Mistakes are good. I don't think they're bad.

When my kids were growing up and even our grandkids now, sometimes they just do dumb things. If one of my kids comes over there and they're sitting around the house with me, with babies, or the kids, and they're sitting at the table and they're fooling around and they spill their milk, they don't get a whipping for that. That's an accident. That's an accident. If I got a whipping for every time I lost something, did something dumb, man, I'd be standing all my life. Now, you take that same little girl and they do a willful act of disobedience. They hit their sister. They bite their sister. They spit on me or somebody else or defy authority. Then it's time to take them to the woodshed. I'm just telling you, mistakes are good as long as you learn from them. When I say they're good, I mean, they're going to happen. You might as well learn from them.

The greatest example of the model in the Bible for this is a man found in the early years of the nation of Israel. Now, we're talking about waiting on God. His name is Samuel. We talked about the simplicity. Now, let's look at this waiting thing. Samuel is a great model for every man and woman. If you don't have it already in your Bible, you ought to have it in. I'm telling you, whoever wants to get to the place that God uses him or her, and that you fulfill God's plan with God's character in the gifts of God, he's your man. I don't know of a better example, probably in the whole Bible, that gives you the details. Our study in his early years unfolds in 1 Samuel chapter 1, 2, and 3. You don't have to even turn to it. I'm going to have you turn here. You want to turn to it, turn to chapter 3.

It's an incredible story. You know the story of Samuel. His mama waited for her to have a boy. She had such a desire to have a little child, a male child. Finally God gave her one. When she got that child, when he became old enough, she took him right down to the temple, a picture of the ministry, gave him to Eli. She said, "Make him a man of God." We find in his early years Samuel working in that ministry. And there's where he learned some of the great principles, and God worked with him, and the story is great. I think two great verses set him apart, not only as a great person in the Old Testament, but a type of you and me. I think these two verses are very key in understanding how we're to wait on God.

The first one is found in 1 Samuel chapter 3 verse 19, and it's key to understanding what God was doing with him. It simply says this, and this is the last verse in chapter 3 before we get into the rest of his ministry:

And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

I think that's simply, probably the greatest single statement. Not only on his life, but the key to your life and my life. How many times we come to Thursday night, Sunday morning, and the message just goes in one ear and out the other. The types, the examples, the patterns, never get down on paper, they never get into a notebook, they never make it into your Bible, and then we wonder why two years, three years, four years, five years later, we're still struggling with the same stuff. You know why it is? Because we let the words fall to the ground. He didn't.

Then the second thing, found in 1 Samuel chapter 2 verse 35, and this is a great point here. God's saying:

And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

That's a great verse. That verse ought to be in everybody's Bible and everybody's heart. But did you see how we're in Romans chapter 12, and how I told you that God will see the finished product, even when it's not finished? Right there is the proof of it. God saw him as a faithful priest before he was a faithful priest. God saw him in the role that God wanted him to be, one of the greatest prophets in the nation of Israel, long before he ever got there. God sees you and me as the finished product. The example of Samuel is a picture of some young man who actually got to where God wanted him to be because he saw it too. And it all starts with letting none of God's word fall to the ground.

Now verse 35, five areas here very quickly, and they match up to us.

1. The first thing he says, "I will raise me up a faithful priest." I told you the key to everything is faithfulness. You can't please God without faithfulness, Hebrews chapter 11. It's the key word. God gives you enough faith to get saved by measure and then you develop that faith as you grow in grace.
2. Second thing, he had God's heart. That'd be Psalms 119.
3. Third thing, he had God's mind. That'd be 1 Corinthians 2:16, Philippians 2:5.
4. Fourth thing, God knew that this man would build him a sure house. Psalms 127:1 says, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Proverbs 9:1 says, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars." We talked about it a couple of months ago. How does the whole Bible build on seven pillars? And those are the same seven pillars that you need to build a church on. Building a sure house. He saw in Samuel everything that we need to see in our lives.
5. Then he says the fifth thing, that he will walk before me forever. That speaks to his commitment that he's never going back to the world, that he's going to walk before God for the rest of his life.

Now that's the character qualities of God, built into a man in the Old Testament. It shows us through his life the process brought about by the power of God, giving him the gifts in his life to do the job. Remember, God will never call you or send you without giving you the tool to do the job, the gifts. But it's a process. And you cannot be in a hurry and you have to always keep it simplistic. It's not about, folks, how well you know the Bible. It's how well you use the Bible. It's

do you follow the principles or do you have one set of rules for somebody else and another set for yourself?

Yet there's a sixth aspect to all this. This is where I want to finish this morning. This is where it all goes back to Romans chapter 12 verse 7, our waiting on ministry. Now this was the greatest thing in his early years as he was preparing. How many times have I taken a young man or a young lady who was wanting to be in ministry? And I showed them the model here that once his mother turned him over to the priest, the priest then began to teach him. While Samuel is sleeping, he's still a young child. He's sleeping. God speaks to him and God is putting into his heart at that point what he's going to do with him down the line. But Samuel doesn't understand it. What does Samuel do? He gets up and he runs over to Eli and he says, "Did you call me?" He couldn't discern the voice of God from the voice of Eli. Most young Christians can't discern the voice of my voice of saying from what God speaks to. So it gets confusing. What's Eli do? Eli says, "Go back to sleep." Second time he goes back to sleep. God speaks to him again. He comes running over to Eli. Eli understands that this kid is still young. He's still green. He doesn't have all of the tools. So he simply says, "Go back to sleep." Third time he comes over and he wakes him up. The Bible says this time Eli perceived that the Lord had called him. See, it was the structure that Samuel was in that interpreted for him what God was doing right up to the point that he got him going. You know what he's learning? The great concept that he's learning from Eli, he's learning to be patient and wait on the Lord.

Let me show you something. Let me show you how what he learned there carries right on into the ministry when he's the great man before Israel. I'm making this point because what you learn right here in my ministry, as I lay it out to you, the things that I choreograph and put into your world, into your life for a purpose, for a reason, to get you where you need to get, to get you the tool to equip you so that you will take what you learn now when you go into ministry someplace down the road, maybe here, maybe someplace else. I'm developing a thing and it's coming out slow, but it's coming. I'm developing a ministry. There was a time years ago when I had some like 14 or 15 churches in a three-state area that had no pastors. Every Sunday there was two guys out of my ministry in all these churches preaching. It's starting to develop itself now. It won't develop any faster than we do, but it's already started to develop. It's one of those things that God brings in in time. What happens is, is you send guys down, they go to a church, they go down there for six, seven months, the people get to know them, they get to know the people, they stay in their homes, they feed them. And then suddenly as the whole thing grows, the person calls up and says, "You know what, we'd like to have that person for our pastor." That's how it's supposed to be done. That's how it's supposed to be done. Very slowly it's beginning to work that way. We can't get in a hurry. I'm not in any hurry. I didn't look for the door. God opened the door. I'm going through the door. Got two guys going out here in the near future to follow up with it, which will really kick the door open farther and off we go. It's just that simple.

But I want you to see how the importance of what he learned in the temple from Eli. He then carried through into the ministry. Now, our first example of this, and there's two, was found in 1 Samuel chapter 9 verse 27. This is Samuel and Saul. This is a great example. It's a great example for any person who really desires ministry.

And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.

And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.

You know what he said to Saul? Saul, you're in too big a hurry. You know that was Saul's characteristic all of his life. Saul was always in a hurry. Saul was a picture of a pastor, a picture of a lot of Christians, who he thinks arrogance takes the place of experience. He was a very arrogant individual. He thought he knew more about it than anybody, certainly thought he knew more about it than Samuel did. And Samuel was the guy that was getting it direct from God. You see, Saul wasn't God's choice, but God gave him a chance. Isn't that wonderful? I mean, God could have just come down and said, "Nope," killed him and put David in. You notice God didn't do that? You know why? Because God will give somebody a chance, even when he knows how they're going to wind up. He does that so at the end that at the great white throne judgment or the judgment seat of Christ, nobody can point their finger at him and say, "You cut me off. I would have done it if you'd have let me do it." You know what he does? He lets us do it. That's something you need to learn in ministry. Everybody gets a chance. Even if they burn you at the end, they get a chance because at the end of the day, it's God's ministry. Not mine, not yours. And he learned that.

God gave Saul a chance. He gave him Samuel. But you know what? Saul would never listen to Samuel. Saul was so arrogant, like so many of God's people, that he thought he knew more about the ministry than Samuel did. He thought that God, the fact that God talked to Samuel, that Saul was the king, so therefore he'd been around a lot longer than Samuel and he just knew how to do it. You know what? Did you ever see the end of his life? His whole life is a screw up. His whole life is a screw up. But you know the thing that got him killed? The thing that got him killed was the fact that he was not willing to wait. How did he get killed? It came down to the end of the day and the sacrifice needed to be made. The Bible says that Samuel tarried. Now Samuel was a priest and he could make the sacrifice. Saul was not a priest. Saul was a king and Saul was a prophet, but Saul was not a priest. You had to be a priest to make the sacrifice. Saul was not a priest. There's only two men in the Bible that only have all three offices. Jesus Christ is a king, he's a prophet and a priest. David is a priest, a prophet and a king. That's why David could eat the shewbread when he was in the temple. I know people don't figure that out. That's exactly what. Saul was not. Saul was a king, he was a prophet, he was not a priest. The Bible says the time of the six o'clock evening when the sacrifice had to be made drew near. And you know what Saul did? Saul said, "Well Samuel's not here. I guess I'll have to do it." And when he did that and he made the sacrifice, he violated one of the most stringent principles in the Bible and that was his undoing. It wasn't everything else that he did, it was that particular thing where he stepped over the line and took the authority away from Samuel that he had no right to take. And God killed him. And God took his kingdom from him and then God wound up killing him and took his mercy from him. Why? All because he couldn't wait. He had to be the main chandelier in the

ballroom. He had to be, "Look at me." He had to be, "Watch me." He had to be, "I'll show you how it's done," and it didn't work out too good for him. That's the first example.

The second example is found in 1 Samuel chapter 12. Now watch this.

And Samuel said unto the people, It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.

Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers.

Here's our second example. What he's doing is what we need to learn to do. He's carrying what he learned in the temple right into ministry. Now when it talks about the gifts of God that we're talking about today, the key to getting and realizing those gifts is simply four things we're talking about today. One is simplicity. The second one, don't get in a hurry. Now the first place we looked at, he was talking to Saul and Saul didn't listen. This place he's talking to the whole nation of Israel. And you know what? They didn't listen either. He's saying, "Wait a minute, stand still. Don't get in a hurry." It isn't, and I know what people think. People think, "Well you know if the rapture comes I want to do something." Well that's an admirable thing, but you know what? Doing something stupid before the rapture comes is worse than doing nothing before the rapture comes. God understands your heart. God realizes that you have to work through some things. He'd rather have you be patient.

He says, "Stand still that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the land which he did to you and to your fathers." You know what he's saying? He's saying stop and look at this thing. Don't try to go out farther until you stop and look at where you're at and where you've been. You've got to keep it in a perspective or you'll lose your purpose. And when you lose your perspective of you, your purpose, your passion goes right out the door.

God has some gifts for you and me. It's Christmas. And Christmas has ceased a long time ago to be about the birth of Christ. Christmas is about gifts. It's about getting. It's about happy times and getting what we want instead of what we deserve. What I say to you on this Sunday before Christmas, what a tragedy it would be if you get more excited and more fired up about the gifts that your friends or your wife and your family has for you and miss the gift that God has for you.

Your verse for the week.

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Be still. Don't get in a hurry. Work at what you learn in my ministry. The things that I teach you, learn about the simplicity. Learn about when we have a program and a process, there's a reason behind it. There's a reason I do everything that I do. You need to learn what that is in its simplicity. You need to wait for God and then you need to take the things you learn right on into the ministry where you go. But it takes some time. It takes a process of grace, exercising your

senses to build your faith and then God, after you build the character of God in your life, God giving you the gifts that do whatever God's calling you to do.

There's no doubt in my mind. This is one of the reasons why we've got to change radically next year where we're going. This is one of the reasons, and Chris and I talked about this yesterday, this is the absolute reason why we've got to make a radical 360. We've got to do something here that's going to, as I said, I don't think it's ever been done before in the history of churches. Maybe it has and I don't know about it, but I don't know anything about it. But it has to be done. It has to be done. It's going to be exactly what, and I'm telling you, I'm just telling you, I've never asked you for anything. I've never come to you for anything, but I'm telling you. It will be the definitive point in our church, and I'm calling the church together to understand where we're going, that you might be able to put these things in a better way in your world, in your life. And we'll go from there.

When we're done, you can still sign up in the back. Next Sunday will be the last time. It will be a great time if you have unsaved people, if you have people looking for a church. It will be a great time for them from their perspective. They will honestly and understand where this church is going, and it'll be very clear for them, "Yeah man, this is where I'm at," or "No, this is where I'm not," as it will for you. Let's pray. Father, we...