Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Permanent Edifying Gifts, Part 3
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:9-10
Code: 1855

This morning we are continuing in our Bible study looking at the spiritual gifts and our basic study has been from the 12th Chapter of I Corinthians. For our visiting friends I might just say a word to put you in context a little bit. We are studying through the letter of I Corinthians. Having arrived at Chapter 12 and verse 8, we began to look at the spiritual gifts there and realized that they were just a part of a greater whole. And so we're stopping in the midst of the flow of the text to discuss all of the passages relative to spiritual gifts. So it's really kind of a theological study in the midst of an expositional study of the book.

We've been incorporating verse 28 of Chapter 12, in which there are mentions of spiritual gifts as well as verses 8 to 10. We also added Ephesians 4 and Romans 12. And so in all of those Scriptures we have pulled together the listing of the categories of spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit has granted to the church.

Now we find ourselves in part 4 of reiterating these gifts and studying them in order to gain an understanding of what they are and how they operate. It is clear to us at this time that the Spirit of God has given to the church gifts, enablements, manifestations, energizing services. All those different words are used to describe the same things. They are Holy Spirit enablements allowing us to minister to one another within the body of Christ. So that we are not spectators, but rather we are involved in the actual operation of the church carrying out the ministry as God has designed it and the Spirit of God has planned it.

And so, as we learn our gifts, as we learn how they operate, as we understand how the Spirit of God works through us, we can give a greater and deeper and broader commitment to do that thing, which God has gifted us to do. So we're studying the spiritual gifts, and in order for you to get the whole picture you need to get all that's involved because we're taking it a piece at a time.

Now to begin with let me just remind you of a Scripture in Ephesians 2 as a backdrop for what we want to say. Ephesians 2:22 says this: "In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." And here the apostle Paul says that the church collectively is a habitation of the Spirit. In other words, the Spirit of God not only indwells individual Christians, but indwells the collective assembly of believers. The Spirit of God indwells the total church. The Spirit indwells any local assembly. The Spirit indwells any individual believer.

So, we at Grace Community Church are an assembly of believers who have become, in a sense, the habitation of the Spirit of God. He lives within us individually and collectively or corporately as He does in the total body of Christ worldwide.

Now this is repeated again in I Corinthians Chapter 3 as a concept and one, which would probably be good to look at. I Corinthians 3:16, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God." And there the ye is plural. Ye collectively, you in total, are the composite temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you. And at the end of verse 17, "The temple of God is holy, which you are."

So we see then that we collectively are the temple of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God doesn't dwell in this building. That's why we don't call it a sanctuary. We call it an auditorium. The sanctuary is the name for the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament where God's Spirit dwelt, where God was manifest, but nowadays the Spirit of God dwells in the body, the individual Christian and in the bodies collectively of the corporate assembly of believers.

Now since we are an assembly of believers that are the habitation of the Spirit, it seems obvious to me and reasonable that the Spirit of God should be in control of this assembly. We would be denying our very identity if He is not. Since He dwells in us He should manifest His indwelling by His power and control over us. That's true in the Christian life. You can possess the Holy Spirit and not be controlled by him, right? That's carnality and the church can be equally carnal. There are assemblies where the Spirit of God dwells because Christians are there, but because they manifest carnality and selfishness and self will the Spirit of God is not in control.

Now that is exactly the case in the Corinthians Church. They were believers, they possessed the Holy Spirit, they were the habitation of the Holy Spirit, but because of their sinfulness and carnality the Spirit of God had been removed from leadership. His power usurped and they themselves were running the show. I pray God that Grace Community Church would be a church where the Spirit of God rules, wouldn't you? Wouldn't that be your prayer? That's mine. Where the Spirit fills, where the Spirit of God controls, where the Spirit of God energizes. And as I look at the church, as I look at this church or any other church, there are certain ways to tell if in fact the Spirit of God does control. Let me give you eight of them, just running them by quickly.

Number one: you can tell a church where the Spirit of God is in control by its unity, by its unity. The Spirit is the spirit of unity, Ephesians 4. And where there is a loving unity, where there is a unity without crushing individuality, the Spirit of God is in control. He seeks unity.

Secondly, you can tell an assembly where the Spirit of God is in control by its fellowship. Its fellowship will be both deep, that is honest and intimate, and real and wide that is inclusive of anybody who cares and who comes and who is a part. It will be non-separatistic and it will be non-

superficial fellowship.

Thirdly, you can always tell an assembly where the Spirit of God controls by its worship. It will be one that worships God really, genuinely, honestly, and its worship will be shared by all. In other words they will come to honor God, they will come to honor Christ, they will speak in honor of the Holy Spirit. They will praise God, they will sing praise, they will live praise, they will talk praise.

Fourthly, you can tell a church that is controlled by the Holy Spirit by its evangelism. The Holy Spirit has come to point us to Christ. The Holy Spirit is the one who declares Christ and in a church where the Spirit of God controls Christ will be being declared. And evangelism will be spontaneous. It will be top priority. It will be natural outflow in the lives of the people who make up that assembly.

Number five: You can tell a church where the Spirit of God is in control by its love. It will be an assembly of people who care about each other, and assembly of people controlled by the attitude of selflessness where real love works, where sacrifice is a bi-word.

And sixthly you can tell a church where the Spirit of God controls by its obedience. It will be a church that will be walking in the path that the word of God prescribes. It will be a church where spontaneous obedience is the pattern of life. Where all that ever needs to be said is this is what the Bible says and response is immediate.

And seventh and tied right with that one, in a church where the Spirit of God controls there will be people who are submitted to the lordship of Christ. There will be people submitted to the lordship of Christ. He will rule and they will lovingly, joyously, willingly submit to that rule.

And then eighth, you can always tell a church filled with the Spirit because there will be ministry, ministry. There will be saints interchanging spiritual gifts. There will be not just a professional pulpit, not just hired practitioners, and pastors and teachers and ministers, but there will be the mass of the community of believers ministering their spiritual gifts. And we've taught in all of these areas, haven't we? We've taught about unity, taught about fellowship, taught about worship, taught about evangelism, love, obedience, the lordship of Christ. Now we're teaching about ministry. If the Spirit of God is thriving in His control of Grace Church there will be ministry and the way we minister, beloved, and the way we minister is by those enablements, those energizing, those gifts that God has given us.

So you see how important it is for us to see and understand them. That's why Chapter 12:1 says, "I don't want you to be ignorant of these things." They are vital to the area of ministry.

Now we've studied point number one in our long-term outline, the gifted men, and we saw that God has given to the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, teaching pastors and teachers for the job

really of instructing the saints in terms of building them to maturity so they can use their gifts.

Now once we've discussed that we move into the second point of our outline into the area of understanding what the gifts are that the individual believers have and through which the Holy Spirit ministers. We said that there are a total of eleven that are mentioned in the New Testament. Eleven gifts, eleven enablements, eleven categories of ministry, and you remember our illustration last week? We said please don't feel that there's only eleven gifts everybody's got this one or this one or this one or this one and it's all the same for all of us. We said that those eleven gifts are like colors on an artist's palette and the Holy Spirit is like an artist and He takes those eleven primary colors and mixes them into combinations and by the time it gets put on you it's different than it is with anybody else. And that's the meaning of verse eleven of I Corinthians 12, which says He divides to every man individually so that no two Christians are alike in the area of their spiritual enablements.

But we've been studying these primary gifts, these primary colors on the palette, if you will, in order to get an understanding of all the categories of ministry, of the areas of ministry and we said there are two basic categories of gifts: the speaking gifts and the serving gifts. Remember those? The speaking gifts: prophecy, knowledge, wisdom, teaching and exhortation, the verbal gifts. Now we're looking secondly at the serving gifts.

Now all that kind of brings you down to where we are. We said there are six serving gifts mentioned in the two passages we're looking at, I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. The first one we mentioned was leadership. The second one was serving or ministry or, if you will, helps. The third one was giving.

Now lets go to the last three. Number four: the gift of mercy, the gift of mercy. Romans 12:8 says this: the end of verse 8, this picking up that one gift in the list of gifts here, "He that shows mercy with cheerfulness." Some people in the body of Christ has been given the gift of mercy, showing mercy. I would say that this is one of the gifts that you can be almost absolutely clear in understanding. There just isn't really that much deviation in what this gift is and how it operates and it's beautiful and I want you to understand so I'm going to spend a little time explaining it to you.

The word mercy is the word *eleon*, *eleon*. It means pity or mercy or compassion and it's a beautiful term really. It's a term that's characteristic of the character of God. In Psalm 103, you have some marvelous statements about the mercy of God just painting his character as merciful. Psalm 103, for example verse 8, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy." Verse 11, "So great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. How great, as the heavens are high above the earth." Verse 13, "As a father pities his children so the Lord pities them that fear Him." God is merciful. God is pitying. God is compassionate. God grants mercy according to Matthew 5.

Now generally the concept of mercy gets scrambled up with the concept of grace in the Scripture. And we talk about God's grace and God's mercy and sometimes we don't distinguish them. Let me see if I can give you a little bit of a run through in Scripture that will help you distinguish from grace. I'm going to give you a definition right now and then I'm going to show you how it works out. Here it is: grace is extended to men in relation to guilt. It has to do with their sin. Mercy is extended to men in relation to misery. It has to do with their situation. Now hang on to that. Grace is related to guilt, mercy is related to misery. Grace is God taking care of our sin. Mercy is God taking care of the mess we're in, our situation. I want to illustrate that to you by having you look at Proverbs 14:21 and 31. Proverbs 14, and we could look at a lot of Old Testament Scriptures but for time we're going to look at two or three and then go on. They all say the same thing.

Proverbs 14, well let's look at verse 20 and we'll get the context a little bit. "The poor," Proverbs 14:20, "The poor is hated even by his own neighbor." Poor people have rough life. "But the rich has many friends," right? A lot of people trying to get into the rich man's pocketbook. Poor people don't have many friends. "He that despiseth his neighbor sins." Watch out how you treat that poor man. "But he that hath" what, "Mercy on the poor is happy." Now listen, or blessed. Mercy is connected with no being sinful, but being what, poor. Poor people need mercy. And here's the introduction of the concept that mercy is related to misery. Mercy is related to a state. Look at verse 31: "He that oppresseth the poor approaches his maker," why because God didn't oppress the poor. He reached out to them. "But he that honors Him has mercy on the poor." If you want to honor God have mercy on the poor. Now the connection I'm trying to make is this: mercy is connected with something you do for someone who is poor. It is connected to misery rather than sin.

Now I want to show you another thought on it. Look at Hosea, Hosea Chapter 4. If you don't have time to look it up don't worry. It just says this: Verse 1, "Hear the word of the Lord children of Israel, for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land because there's no truth nor mercy, no knowledge of God in the land." What happened was there became a terribly oppressing society that everyone, in which everyone was oppressing the poor and no one was relieving them. And relieving a poor man of his poverty is mercy. See. That's his point. But rather than anybody helping the poor there was swearing and lying and killing and stealing and adultery and so forth. And at the end of the book of Hosea in the third verse of the 14th chapter it says, "In thee the fatherless find mercy."

Now notice mercy is connected with poor people. Mercy is connected with orphans. Did you get that? Now if you were to trace mercy further through the Old Testament you would see that God's mercy is relative man's misery. And God is merciful in the sense of freely without any deserving on our part taking us out of our misery and meeting every need. So you say, "All right John, that's the general concept. How does it relate to the gift? What is the gift of mercy?" The gift of mercy is the same thing. Now listen, the gift of mercy is relative to people who are in need, poor people and orphans for sure. Terrible. We'll find out later there are others in that category.

Let me give you a parable about mercy. Look at Luke 10:30. Jesus is having a conversation with a rich, a lawyer rather, and probably rich too, and he says, "What about the law and so forth?" They have a little dialogue. And Jesus says, "Well I'd like to fulfill the law and love my neighbor but I don't know who my neighbor is. Could you kindly fill me in? He says, "Who is my neighbor?" And Jesus said, verse 30, "A certain man when down from Jerusalem from Jericho and fell among thieves, who stripped him, he was mugged, took his clothes, wounded him, departed leaving him half dead. And, by chance, there came a certain priest that way and when he saw him he passed by on the other side," pointing up here was a really strong indictment of Jewish priesthood. Same with the Levite in verse 32. He went on the other side too. "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed came where he was and when he saw him he had compassion on him."

Now here you have the introduction of the concept of mercy or compassion and it is beautiful because there is nothing here to motivate this man but compassion. He isn't told that if he goes and helps this poor beaten Jew he's going to get a great reward from the Samaritans. In fact, he wouldn't even dare tell any Samaritans that he did it because the Samaritans had no dealing with the Jews and there was nothing but animosity and he wouldn't popularize himself with his own people by helping this poor beaten Jew. And so he does something, which he can never get any credit for from his own people. He does something for which there is no ulterior motive, there is no response, there is no remuneration, there is nothing to be gained except the relief that comes from dispensing the compassion that's in your heart. That's the beauty of the selflessness of the way a spiritual gift operates.

"He went over to him, bound up his wounds, poured in oil and wine, set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him." That's quite a deal. The guy was probably in a hurry. We don't know what kind of business he had in Jericho, but he stops and takes the day to do this and take care of this fellow. He heals his wounds as best he can, takes him to an inn, takes care of him, next day departs, leaves a couple of coins to the host, and says, "If there's any more than this I'll pay you on my way back." You say, "Why did he do this? What did he have to gain? Was this a famous guy lying by the road?" No. It was just a nobody. It doesn't say a thing about him. Why did he do it? Because he had what, compassion. Somewhere down in his heart there was pity. There was mercy that was unmixed with any self motive. And then Jesus says to the lawyer, "Which of these do you think was really the neighbor?" Well he said, "The one who had mercy," verse 37. Jesus said, "You go and do the same thing." It's the spirit of mercy. It is giving without any thought of any return and giving to someone who is in misery.

So we find out it's the poor, it's the orphans and it's the mugged, the beat up, the maimed, the rejected, the despised on which mercy operates. Now let me take you a step further. Look at Matthew 9, and you're going to see something very consistent in the gospels. Matthew 9:27, now notice this: "When Jesus departed from there two blind men followed Him crying and saying." Now

He's got two blind people following Him. This is what they say: "Son of David, have grace on us." Is that what they say? What do they say? Mercy. Why? because mercy is connected with misery. "Have mercy on us." When He was coming to the house the blind men came to Him and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do it? They said, 'Yes Lord,' and He touched their eyes and said, 'According to your faith be it unto you.'" He had mercy. What was mercy? Mercy is eliminating human misery.

Matthew 15:22, Matthew 15:22, hurry a little bit here, "Jesus," verse 21, "went from there and departed into the borders of Tyre and Sidon and the woman of Canaan came out of the same border and cried unto Him saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon.'" Here is a lady whose misery is a demon-possessed daughter, and again she's asking for mercy. To the Jewish mind mercy is always related to misery, so you can have the misery of poverty, the misery of being an orphan, the misery of being beaten up and left for dead, the misery of being blind, the misery of having a demon-possessed daughter. It's somebody in human suffering; somebody in misery. And, of course, it's wonderful to see what Jesus did. Jesus healed the people who had these miseries, who had these terrible sins and diseases and so forth.

Now in this case you have an interesting result, verse 23, "He answered her not a word." The case here, of course, is relative to Jesus dealing with the Jews before He dealt with the Gentiles. Later on it says, verse 24, "He answered and said, 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of Israel.' Then came she and worshipped Him saying, 'Lord help me,' and He answered and said, 'It is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.' And she said, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs, which fall from their master's table.' And Jesus answered her and said to her, 'Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou will,' and her daughter was made well from that very hour." Such a persistent Gentile He couldn't turn back, even though His primary ministry opened up to Israel. Now He again is showing mercy. That's the main point.

Look at the 17th Chapter of Matthew the 14th verse: "When he was come to the multitude there came to Him a certain man kneeling down and saying, 'Lord have mercy on my son for he's epileptic and greatly troubled and falls into the fire and into the water all the time.'" Again human misery a father with an epileptic child.

20th Chapter of Matthew verse 29, "They departed from Jericho and a whole multitude followed Jesus and another two blind men came by the wayside and heard Jesus passing by and they cried and said, 'Have mercy on us O Lord, Son of David.'" And again in verse 31 the crowd said, "You guys shut up and leave Him alone. They said, 'Have mercy on us O Lord, Son of David," and Jesus touched them and opened their eyes. He had compassion. He had mercy. Verse 34 says, "And they received their sight."

Now you see this is over and over in the gospels. Check out Mark 10:46. Check out Luke 17:11. These places you're going to find the same thing, mercy connected with human misery. So we got a lot of things. Now let's go one step further in Acts 9 and we'll pull it altogether. Acts 9 we meet a very very lovely lady and when we meet her she's dead, but she isn't dead for very long. She does get a death ministry in the truest sense. Peter raises her from the dead. That we are not able to do. But verse 36 of Acts 9, "And there was at Joppa a certain disciple by the name of Tabitha, by interpretation, Dorcas," which means gazelle. "This woman was full of good works," and notice this word, "almsdeeds."

This is a word that is interesting. Some of you know the word in the English language, eleemosynary. The word eleemosynary is used to speak of a non-profit corporation. This corporation is eleemosynary, that means it doesn't seek to make a profit. It is supposedly a charitable organization. It is giving rather than taking. The word eleemosynary in English comes from *eleemosune*in Greek, which is the word here for almsdeeds and *eleemosune* in Greek comes from *eleon*, which means mercy. So the way to translate would be the woman was full of good works and mercy deeds. Mercy deeds. Here is a lady with the gift of mercy, is you will. Mercy deeds. What do we find out about her mercy deeds? Well it came to pass in those days she was sick and died and they washed her and took her in an upper chamber and leave her body there for a while and Peter heard about it and the story goes, "And Peter arose," verse 39, "And went and they came to the upper chamber and all the widows were there weeping." A whole bunch of old widows were there weeping. And you know what they were doing? They were showing the coats and garments that Dorcus had made while she was alive.

You know what the gift of mercy is? The gift of mercy is meeting the misery of orphans and the poor and the sick and the beaten and the abused and the widows, even if it is making coats or blankets for them. That's the gift of mercy. It's doing whatever needs to be done to extend compassion and pity to somebody in misery. And, of course, Peter knelt down and prayed and said, "Tabitha, arise, and she opened her eyes and got out of bed and they had a party." That's the gift of mercy. It's relative to the compassion of the heart. It isn't emphasizing the giving. That's a different gift. Often they come in combination, but it's emphasizing the compassion of the heart that's involved. It's like I Corinthians 12:26, "When one member of the body suffers," what, "all the members suffer." It's the gift of mercy. It's the enablement to sympathize with the suffering person, to come alongside the poor, the sick, and the destitute, and the orphan, and the widowed, and I would add even those in prison and minister. And maybe it isn't that you give them anything except your heart.

Dr. Criswell tells the beautiful story of a little girl who came home from school and said, "Mommy, my best friend came to school today and said her mother died." The mother said to her little child, "Well what did you say to her dear?" The child replied, "Oh I didn't say anything, mother, I just went over to her desk and sat beside her and cried with her." And maybe that's the gift of mercy. Sympathy. And you know what it says in Romans 12:8? It says, "Mercy with cheerfulness." And the Greek word is

hilaraus, from which we get hilarious, cheerful ness. Joyously offering sympathy to the sufferer. That's mercy. Great thing.

Some of you are gifted in that area. I know you are. The Spirit of God has given you those areas of ministry, and you're involved with hospital visitation, convalescent ministries, and shut-ins and the poor and the needy. Some of you, I see ladies here making quilts and I see people going to convalescent homes and sometimes I go to the hospital to visit somebody and they'll tell me, "Look they've had too many people there already from that Grace Community Church. Who are you?" I went to see George Berry and they said, "Who are you?" And I said, "Well I'm the pastor." They said, "Ha, we've heard that five times already. Are you the chief pastor?" Some people have that ministry. God bless them for that. I've never felt that I was supposed to be a professional hospital caller. There's nothing worse than somebody running around doing all of that without the gift of mercy. But I do believe that God gives all of you those enablements and when you have them use them, use them.

Fifth of the six gifts. We'll hurry with this one. The gift of faith, the gift of faith. I Corinthians 12:9 mentions the gift of faith. You say, "What is the gift of faith?" Well obviously it is a supernatural capacity for believing God. It is a supernatural capacity for believing God. Somebody to whom obstacles are only challenges. Somebody who believes beyond what is visible. Now I'm sure in the early years of the church, in the first century, it was connected with miracles, and it was connected with very very astonishing miracles, but in our day the gift of faith is connected with prayer and with God's response to prayer as we see Him work today.

We don't mean by the gift of faith here saving faith. All of us have received that. We don't mean the general faith by which we live. We all manifest that, but this is a special gift limited to certain Christians. It has to do with an intensive ability to trust God, an unusual capacity to believe God in the face of a storm, in the face of enormous obstacles. Jesus pinpointed it in Matthew 17:20 when He said, "If you had the faith of a grain of mustard seed you could say to that mountain be removed." And Paul reiterates that in I Corinthians 13:2 and he says, "If I have all faith so that I could remove mountains," and there is the gift beyond what anyone else could believe to be done, the gift of faith can lay hold of the promise of God. And read Matthew 21, God says, "If you ask anything," Jesus said, "Believing you shall receive it." Faith activates God. There are many New Testament Scriptures, say that, faith activates God. You say, "But I don't always have a lot of faith." Yeah, well you can thank God that somebody else does on your behalf. You know there are certain people that when I have a need I want them to know about it because they have the faith to activate the power of God in a certain thing.

Let me give you an illustration of it. Acts 27, there was storm that Paul was in the ship and they were trying to get over to Rome, having a lot of trouble, the ship was falling apart. The eurquillo or the Eruoclydon had hit, ship was being torn to pieces so they frapped the ship, that means they wrapped

it with these like wenches tight underneath, under girding it, and they were afraid they were going to go down toward North Africa to the Certies and get smashed. So they lowered the gear and they were just driven with the wind. As they were driven and driven and driven Paul pops up in verse 21, in the midst of this horrible nor'easter storm that was going to destroy them all, no way to navigate, just being moved by the storm, Paul stood up in verse 21 and said, "Sirs, you should have hearkened unto me and not have loosed from Crete and gained this harm and loss," this is what you want a Monday morning quarterback in the middle of that storm, told you so, "But now I have a word to add. Be of good cheer." Cheer up everybody. The ship goes over on its side and gets dunked in water. Cheer up. Why? "For there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, only of the ship." Oh that's wonderful news. The ship sinks and we walk to Rome, right? Where do you get that confidence Paul in the midst of the storm?

Verse 23, Well, "There's an angel that came to see me tonight and you know what he said to me? 'Fear not Paul, you must be brought before Caesar and lo God has given you all them that sail with you.' Wherefore sirs, be of good cheer," here it comes, "For I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me." Now I know some Christians that would be down in the bottom of the ship panicky. There's Paul on deck, "Everybody cheer up, it's all going to be great," in the middle of a storm, like no storm, a *Euroquillo*, the severest storm that ever hit the Mediterranean, that style of storm. "I believe God." Isn't that good? I'm glad for people like that. This is special faith.

Now listen, it is this kind of faith that supports all of us, that under girds all of us, because all of the gifts edifies others. It is the power to lay hold on God's promises for the benefit of everybody. When you go down through the book of Hebrews, the 11th Chapter, and see those heroes of faith, Abel, and Noah, and Abraham, Moses, and Joshua, and David and all the time, every time you see their faith it is on their faith that somebody else is strengthened. It is on their faith that something wonderful happens to somebody else. With the history of the church there has been thousands of saints who believed God in the face of terrible fear and even death, who strengthened them who are around. There are people today with this gift that don't see any obstacles, who just believe God for amazing things. That's exciting.

Hudson Taylor believed that God could win the Chinese people of his day, without any money, without any support, and refusing to ask for a penny, he founded the China Island Mission and had the greatest work in the history of that nation. George Mueller did the same thing. There have been missionaries who've gone in and claimed tribes and people and nations for God. There have been evangelists who have claimed a whole city, a whole county, a whole country for God and it has happened in response to faith. And you know what's so exciting about that is we who don't have that kind of faith we get caught in the whole glory of the thing and get swept along.

When I came to Grace Church, I was one of those kind of people who had the not too much faith. I figured if the Lord was good we'd be able to build this church up to 7 or 8 hundred people and maybe

a thousand in God's grace. But there were some people who were way beyond me in their faith and I'm just riding the train right along with them. Their faith is the engine. I'm just in one of the cars and I thank God for what God has done in all of our lives because some people have activated His power because they have faith beyond obstacles. We talked about building that building. We said, "Well we need to get a million and a half dollars in cash," and at the time we had about sixty thousand and somebody said, "That's a lot how are we going to have it?" And on and on we went and there were some who said, "But that's no problem. God's going to do it. We believe He's going to do it," and here we are today and because of their faith God has moved in response and all of us have been built up and edified. And I can believe God today more than I ever did in the past because others who have believed Him He has responded to and I have been a part of seeing that response.

If you have the gift of faith use it would you? Spend time on your knees. Spend time believing God and take what you believe and tell it to somebody else to encourage them to see what God does in response.

Lastly, the gift of discernment. I would kind of short cutting things here for time's sake, the gift of discernment or discerning spirits. Verse 10 of I Corinthians 12, add to the gifts, the serving gifts of leadership, serving, giving, mercy, faith, the gift of discerning spirits. Now this is a very controversial gift and I'm not even going to try to get embroiled in all of the controversy about it, but just to present to you what may be as valid a view as any in understanding what the gift is.

The root word for discern, *diacreno*means to judge through, or to see through something to the truth that is there, to truly evaluate something, and discerning spirits is simply to evaluate the spirit, whether it is God or it is a spirit other than the Holy Spirit.

Now in the early church it's very clear how this gift would manifest itself. This gift was the watchdog of the church. This was the patrol. This was the guard, the sentinel for the church. In the early years of the church when the Bible had not been written the New Testament was not penned, people would say, God says this and God says this and I'm a prophet of God and I speak for the Holy Spirit, and it was difficult to know who did and who didn't. And there was some people that the Spirit of God gave a supernatural ability to so that they could say you're true, you're a phony, you're for real, you're not; the gift of discerning spirit. That is the Spirit of God speaking they would say, that is not the spirit of God speaking but a demon spirit that is from Satan here and so forth.

Now the sad part of the Corinthian church is that the people who had that gift were either not using it or when they did use it they were being ignored by the rest so that as we saw in I Corinthians 12:3, somebody had actually stood up in the assembly and cursed Jesus and they had agreed that it was from the Holy Spirit. Well somebody with the gift of discernment should have stood up and said, "That is not the Spirit of God speaking," and they should have listened to that. That's what the gift primarily was used for. In I Corinthians 14:29 Paul calls on the Corinthians to exercise it. "Let the

prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge." Let them discern. Let's have somebody checking on what's being said. It's a very important for the protection of the church.

Paul illustrates it as the apostles illustrate all the gifts, but Paul particularly in Acts 16, listen: There's a girl going along and Paul is walking along with Silas and this young maiden comes along and she says, "These men are the servants of the Most High God who show us the way of salvation." That sounds like good P.R. These men are the servants of the Most High God who show us the way of salvation and she did it for many days. You say, "Terrific," you know it's just like the car going down the street with the PA system on announcing these men. All of a sudden Paul turns around in verse 18 and says, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ come out of her, and the spirit came out the same hour." You know what Paul knew? Paul knew that was not the Holy Spirit. Paul knew that was a demon spirit and he cast it out. How did he know? Not by what the spirit said, but because God had given him the discernment to know it. The gift of discernment in those days was to recognize the satanic counterfeit, to pen it.

Now some argue that doesn't need to be done anymore because you can always recognize a counterfeit by comparing that person with Scripture, right? And so any more there's no need for the gift of discernment, but I rather think it difficult to say that since you can't find anywhere in the Scripture where it says the gift of discernment has ceased. There is no such intimation even made, certainly no such statement. I think it's best to just let the gift shift and change as the history of the church flows and be what it needs to be in any period. I think today it's just as important to protect the church from impure doctrine as it ever was and maybe the style of operation is different.

In studying a little bit into church history to see if the gift ever operated in the past I got into the early father's period after the New Testament was done and a movement arose known as Montenism and Montenism was a disastrous movement, frankly, where Montenism claimed to be the only voice of the Holy Spirit and it was very very unbiblical. And one of the historians said this: "The whole Montenist movement was rejected because of the exercise of the gift of discernment on the part of a few people. They recognized that his chief spokesman, Maxmilla, was speaking with a spirit other than the Holy Spirit and because of that recognition they denied credibility of the whole Montenist movement and it was written off as a heresy, thank God. And God protected that church in those early years from that heresy by some who had the gift of discernment.

I remember going into the prayer room one time, right here, and a certain occasion happened on a certain night. A girl came in there and began to speak and to pray. And one of our staff stopped right in the middle I demand to know what spirit that is. That's not the Holy Spirit. That's the gift of discernment and praise God it protected the church from a very difficult situation and moreover protected her. When it was all said and done God delivered her as well.

What is the gift of discernment? Well it's kind of like in the United States House of Representatives, we have that trophy of bureaucracy called the committee on committees. And discernment is the gift on gifts. A. T. Robertson says, "It is given to tell whether the gifts are really of the Holy Spirit and supernatural or merely natural or even diabolical." Peter exercised it in Acts 5 when Ananias and Sapphira came and supposedly were worshiping God and Peter says, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" How did he know that? He had discernment. This kind of gifted Christian can intuitively identify truth from error, hypocrisy from genuineness, and false prophets are everywhere today and I believe there are some people who are gifted by God to unmask false prophets. I think some of them write books. I think some of the people who have done good work in the cults and in the occult may be exercising the gift of discernment, the capacity to see through something to the core of its hypocrisy.

The gift can be exercised in many ways. Let me just share what possibly could be the use of it today. It could be used to reveal demonism in any form, any form. It could be used to reveal false prophets and spiritual phony's. You know I have a very dear friend who has that gift and this is one of the most convincing things to me that it still exists, is that I see it operate in this person's life. This person can spot a spiritual phony without missing, usually. Something's wrong in that person's life. I don't know what it is, but something's wrong. And where I would go blissfully on thinking the best, something's wrong, for the protection of the body.

Sometimes someone say to me, "You better not put that person in such a such position. You'd better not have that person come to your church and do, because something's not right, protecting the church. I think the gift can even be used to see the intrusion of carnal elements into worship. There are people who minister even from here singing and so forth and doing things all throughout the church in any ministry, in any area of worship that are doing it in a flash. And there are some people who can read that loud and clear, and some of the rest of us we don't know what is going on.

The gift can discern one in whom the Holy Spirit is genuinely working. The same person will often say to me, "You know there's a person really energized by the Spirit of God. I can see it." But perhaps the gift of discernment can be used too when you have two Christians arguing instead of going to a pagan court they are brought before some people to make a judgment. I Corinthians 6:5, and if they both argue for their own side you maybe use somebody with the gift of discernment to determine whose right and whose wrong and who deserves what. They are the watchmen of the church. And I don't have any reason to believe that they're gone. I do have reason to believe that maybe their ministry is altered from what it was in the first century.

Now I want to warn you about something. This gift can easily deteriorate into critical, proud, condemning. It can easily degenerate into a judgmental spirit when operated in the flesh. But it's important.

There they are, six categories of serving gifts: leadership, supervise the saints; serving, support the leaders; giving, supply the needy; mercy, sympathize with the sick and the poor and the destitute; faith, secure God's power; discernment, save the saints from the counterfeit. All those dimensions sum up with the speaking gifts to make the church mature in Christ. So we see the primary colors, eleven of them on the palette of the Spirit as He paints the portrait on the canvas of the church. And it's a beautiful combination designed to reveal Christ and it only really works when you are faithful to minister in your area.

Father, thank you for helping us again this morning to understand your revelation. We bless your name for giving us a part in your ministry, letting us share in the gifting ness. Help us to be faithful, Lord. There's so many folks who you've given the gift to and they just don't use it, self, carnality, the flesh, laziness, ignorance, counterfeits. Lord, move all that out of the way and let us minister. Let it be said of us the Holy Spirit operates that church because there is unity and fellowship and worship and evangelism, because there is obedience, because there is submission to the lordship of Christ, because there is love and because those people there minister to each other with their gifts. May that testimony be our testimony. It can only be ours collectively when each one of us is faithful. In Jesus' name, to do what He's gifted us to do. That's our prayer. Amen.

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