

It's Not the Gift but the Giver

by Denis Lyle

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual gifts and gifted men in the church, highlighting the roles of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor/teachers, and exhorters.

Scripture: Proverbs 18:21, Acts 8:4, Acts 20:28, Romans 12:8, Ephesians 4:11

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts", "Effective Communication"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the power of speech and the importance of examining who we listen to and how we communicate. He emphasizes the impact of gifted communicators, highlighting the ability to influence and manipulate through speech. Lyle delves into the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit, focusing on the Speaking Gifts, such as apostles and prophets, and their foundational role in the church. He discusses the roles of evangelists and pastor/teachers in continuing the ministry of spreading the gospel and nurturing believers, while also touching on the fortifying ministry of exhortation and encouragement within the church.

Transcript

Reading: Ephesians 4:1-16

12. LOOK WHO'S TALKING ... SPEAKING GIFTS

Have you ever noticed how many words we hear or speak each day? Our television sets, our radios, our telephones and our mobiles all produce constant communication. Do you ever find yourself seeking peace and quiet, a place just to get away from all the noise? Now throughout history, there have been skilled communicators. Some speakers have been able to motivate entire nations to fight wars or to support difficult causes. Others can influence people young people to take drugs, and to live a life of promiscuity.

Adolph Hitler knew the tremendous importance of speech. Few speakers have equalled his power and persuasiveness. This German leader was a volcano, spewing speeches as deadly as white hot lava. Through his ability to speak the language, he was able to capture the minds and hearts of his people and to lead them in

some of history's worst chapters.

Think of June 1940, the place is Nuremberg, Germany, where a gigantic Nazi victory rally is being conducted. Nearly a quarter of a million party faithfuls have assembled to hear their great Fuhrer speak.

German troops had defeated France only the week before, meaning that practically all of Europe lay at the feet of Hitler. The only pocket of resistance was located on these islands. At that time the entire world was certain that Great Britain would soon be invaded. This was the background as the German dictator approached the microphone. He began, "I hear the British are asking,

When is he coming When is he coming Well, tonight, I say to the British, be patient for I AM COMING". Hitler screamed out the final phrase, "I am coming", no less than three times that warm June evening in Germany.

According to witnesses, when he said it the first time there arose a growl from the throats of 250,000 people. The second time turned that growl into a mighty roar. But the results of the third time were as if a bomb had exploded, causing those thousands of Nazis to leap to leap to their feet and scream out until many actually lost their voices.

You see, it was his speaking gift which enabled Hitler to manipulate thousands. The people listened to him and followed him blindly. They were unaware of his power over them. Subsequent events indicate that demon forces were speaking through him. Today we must pay attention to our communicators and their communications. We must realise how powerful gifted communicators can be. We must always remember to examine who's talking. The Bible says, that "Death and life are in the power of the tongue". (Prov 18:21)

What a remarkable gift is the ability to speak. How very devastating is the gift when it is Satan driven. How very wonderful and blessed is the gift when it is Spirit-directed. Now every believer has one or more spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit gives these gifts to believers according to His own sovereign plan and purpose. These spiritual gifts are not given primarily for our enjoyment or pleasure, but rather to make us a blessing to others. And through the power of the Holy Spirit we are able to be effective as we minister in churches, on our jobs, and in our colleges. Spiritual gifts are listed in four chapters in the Bible (Rom Ch 12; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4; and 1 Pet 4) When you combine the lists, you end up with nineteen different gifts and offices. Its interesting also that each of the lists of spiritual gifts gets smaller. Now Peter in his epistle seems to summarise these gifts into categories. Look at what he says. (1 Pet 4:10-11)

" If any man speak", so there are Speaking Gifts, and then, "if any man minister", or " serve", so there are Serving Gifts. Then as we shall see in our future studies there are Sign Gifts. Now our purpose in this study is to consider the Speaking Gifts. Speaking gifts are Spirit-given abilities to speak for the Lord! This brings us back to consider:

(1) THE FOUNDATIONAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Do you see what Paul says here "And He gave... "

(4:11) The apostles and prophets are foundational gifts to the church. You see:

(a) THESE ARE SPECIAL MINISTRIES HERE:

Now, what are apostles and prophets Some people say they are gifts. But that is not strictly true. There is not a gift of apostleship and a gift of a prophet. Paul is not talking here so much about "gifts", as about "gifted men". Apostles and prophets are gifted men. They are official titles... special ministries.

1. These are GIFTED Men:

Did you notice that (4:9-10) are a parenthesis So if you skip over (4:9-10) verses (4:8) and (4:11) read this way, " Wherefore He... and He gave... "So

(4:11) refers to the gifts that He gave in (4:8) What are those gifts Apostles and prophets! Now according to (4:7) all Christians receive spiritual gifts. But in

(4:8, & 11) He gives gifted men. Whom does he give them to To the church. For (4:12) says, "For the perfecting of the saints". So, a distinction needs to be made between spiritual gifts and gifted men. Think of an outstanding Bible teacher. Pastor Mullan, now the Spirit of God gave him a gift to minister to the body, but He also give him as a gift to this local church. Do you know how Jim prays in the weekly prayer meeting He thanks God for the gift given to this church. He's perfectly right. For there is a distinction between spiritual gifts and gifted men. 1.

2. These are APPOINTED Men:

Do you recall Pauls words "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers..." (look at 1 Cor 12: 28)

Do you see that word "set", it means appointed. God has appointed. Its not a gift of grace, its a divine appointment... like an ambassador being appointed to Italy, France, Germany or any other country. God has appointed apostles, prophets and teachers. In addition, He has given gifts such as miracles, healing, helps, governments. There are men appointed to office as well as gifts given to believers. Do you see the distinction in the verse The distinction between the two is made in the word "set or appointed", and the phrase " after that". So there are (a)

(b) THESE ARE SPECIAL MEN HERE:

" And He gave some apostles and some prophets... "

* Consider the APOSTLES:

1. Think of their Unique APOSTLESHIP:

The word means, "one who is sent with a commission."

The Lord Jesus had many disciples, but he selected 12 apostles. (Matt 10:1-4) A disciple is a "follower", or " learner", but an apostle is "a divinely appointed representative." When someone says, "Who is an apostle The twelve are referred to. (Lk 6:13-16) You say, "Is that the limit of its official use" No. One other man in the New Testament falls into the category of an official apostle. His name was Paul. He says to the Romans, " Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God".

(Rom 1:1 Gal 1:1) These thirteen are the official apostles. 1.

2. Think of their Unique ACTIVITIES:

What was their duty Well, John says, "That which was from the beginning (Christ) which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life. (For the life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto

us) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you". Who is this collective "we", that John is talking about It is the apostles. He is speaking as an apostle, saying that an apostle is someone who heard and saw Jesus Christ and declares Him to others. My, there are no apostles today because no one see's Jesus Christ today. Peter says, " Whom having not seen ye love". (1 Pet 1:8) When someone says that he saw Jesus Christ the other day, remember this verse. The apostles had to be those who had seen, heard, and had a vital personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They had to see the resurrected Christ. When they were appointing a successor to Judas, do you recall one of the qualifications He had to be a witness of the resurrection. You say, "What about Paul" He saw the resurrected Christ! (Acts 9:5 18:9-10) 1.2.

3. Think of their Unique ABILITIES:

Paul says, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. (miracles)". (2 Cor 12:12 Heb 2:3-4)

They had unique abilities and miraculous powers. My, whenever Peter's shadow fell on people, they were healed. (Acts 5:15-16) They were a unique group for a unique period of history to lay down a doctrinal foundational and to establish a pattern. Do you know what Paul says (Eph 2:20) Now how many times do you lay a foundation Once Once the foundation is laid, the building goes up! So I believe apostles and prophets have ceased and their ministry has been taken over by evangelists and pastors. My, the apostles had no successors. W.A.Criswell aptly says, "Like the delegates to a constitutional convention, when their work was done, the office ceased". After

(Acts Ch 15) the last time we know they ever met together, they are scattered all over the world and never appear again. Why When they were gone, they were gone. Full stop! The church was founded and they were no longer needed!

* Consider the PROPHETS:

1. WHO they Are!

Who are the prophets The Greek word "prophetes," means "one who speaks out". We think of a prophet as someone who says, "In three weeks the sky is going to fall". But prediction was not the prophet's primary function. The prophet was someone who gave God a voice in the world. 1.

2. WHAT they Did!

What was the prophets function Well, remember that in NT times, there was no Bible like we use today. They had only the Old Testament. The New Testament books were in the process of being written. While these were being composed and completed, there were gifted men who were able to speak the Word of God. Evidently, they spoke the word immediately from God.

Do you recall that Agabus had the unique ministry of prophecy concerning what was going to happen at Jerusalem (Acts 12:28) My, in the Early Church there were prophets who preached in association with the apostles. (Acts 11:27 13:1 21:4 1 Cor 14:1) 1. 2.

3. WHERE they Served!

A prophet was geared to a local church. The apostle had a broad-base ministry to the world-wide church, the prophet had a ministry to a local congregation. There is no indication of apostles in Corinth, but there were prophets, indicating a localised ministry. (1 Cor 14:29)

Now are there apostles and prophets today No! Because the Word of God gives us all that we need. These gifted men were associated with the Foundational Ministry of the Church. Well, about today Well, note:

(2) THE FUNDAMENTAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Look at (4:11) Now remember Paul is not talking here so much about " gifts", as about "gifted men". Every so often I hear the same refrain, "The day of preaching is over. Preaching is dead."

My, I don't believe it. There may be some dead preaching, but preaching is not dead. Perhaps you heard about the preacher who used a lot of loose notes. One day as he was preaching in the country, a gust of wind blew through the window and scattered his notes out the other window. A cow was in the field, came along and ate the preachers notes and dried up! I tell you, there may some dry, dead preaching out there, but the preaching of the Word of God should not be a dry experience! Now notice, Paul talks here about

(a) EVANGELISTS:

Think of:

1. The MEANING of the Word:

We think of an evangelist as someone who travels around preaching the gospel. Some say that the derivation of the word comes from soap sellers. These men used to market the soap after they had made it. They would go downtown, find a dirty guy, haul him out on the street corner and wash him. Then they would say,

" That's what the product can do". So those who preached the gospel were called "soap sellers", because they were cleaning up the insides of people. That basically is what an evangelist is, one who proclaims good news... a preacher of the gospel. 1.

2. The MINISTRY of the Worker:

If we want to know what an evangelist is like, we ought to follow one around. So let's follow Philip and find out just exactly what he was involved in. Look at (Acts 8)

Look at (8:4) Now that is what an evangelist does. He preaches the Word. It's important to remind many evangelists that it is important for them to preach the Word, and not just to read the text, depart from the text, tell ten stories and then give an invitation. Look at

(8:5) There is an example of an evangelist at work... he is a preacher of Christ. He is endeavouring to win people to Christ. Look at (8:6) Now (8:35) presents a totally different situation for Philip. In the first part of the chapter, Philip is preaching Christ to a crowd, at the end of the chapter Philip is preaching Christ to one man.

You see, an evangelist can be equally effective with groups and individuals. For the evangelist is given to the church and energised for the purpose of winning people to Jesus Christ.

Now listen to this statement! Not all the evangelists were apostles, but all the apostles were evangelists.

My, this is important, that the work of preaching the gospel, which belonged to the apostles, is now the work of the evangelists. (Acts 8:5, 14-15) Of course, in the Early Church every believer was a witness, and we should be witnesses today. William Booth, the powerful soul-winner and founder of the Salvation Army was once asked,

" Do you think you have the best witnessing school in the world" Booth replied, " No, I don't think my methods are the best methods. I think the best method of giving people a burden for lost souls would be to take them to the devils hell and allow them to experience what it is to be lost in hell. Separated from God for an eternity in the fire that could never be quenched. Then I believe that men would truly have a burden". Incidentally, do you have a burden A burden for your family A burden to see them saved

There are evangelists today, but the fact that you don't possess this gift does not excuse you from being burdened for lost souls or witnessing to them. Paul talks about (a) and then he talks about:

(b) PASTOR/TEACHERS:

Now there is only one office here. It is not pastors and teachers rather it is pastor/teachers. Now if the office of evangelists, fills up the void of the apostles, what is the office that fills up the void of the prophets The office of pastor/teacher! You see, when the NT prophets all died off, the teaching pastor then had the local ministry to a body of believers! You say, What does a teaching pastor do Two things, pastor and teach. You say,

" Well what does pastor mean" Protect the flock. What does teach mean Feed the flock. That is the

basic ministry. When Paul was saying goodbye to the elders at Ephesus he gave them some wise instruction.

Look at (Acts 20:28-31) What's Paul message to the

elders Feed and warn, teach and warn. That is a teaching pastor. He stays in one place in order to mature the people. He protects the flock, builds safeguards for them and warns them.

Sometimes people say to me, "Why do you say certain things against certain groups" I want to warn you about them. Pastor- teachers, teach, lead, warn, rule, shepherd. My, I'll do whatever I can to try and keep the flock in tow! That is the role of the shepherd, thats the role of the elders! Elders as I ask my own heart, I ask yours, are you fulfilling your role Are you feeding and warning Are you seeking to protect the flock from false teaching Are you seeking to keep the flock in tow (1) (2) But, there is a final aspect of ministry which I want to touch upon in closing this ...!

(3) THE FORTIFYING MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Paul speaking of spiritual gifts in (Rom 12:8) says this,

" He that exhorteth on exhortation... "Now the word that Paul uses here is very interesting. Think of:

(a) THE MEANING OF THE WORD:

The word here is the same word used of the Holy Spirit in (Jn 14:16) The Holy Spirit is the Comforter. The word here means "to comfort, help, advise and strengthen". At one time churches had public encouragers. These gifted people, in just two or three minutes would speak words to encourage the entire church. These public encouragers were like fire pokers.

Do you know what a poker does Well, its used to stir up the fire and make it burn better.

Exhorters are just like this today. Some grumps off course never have an encouraging word. They are always critical and cold. A hundred things can go right around the church, but if one thing goes wrong they gripe about it. But don't you love those people who always have a positive word. They're always excited about what God is doing. They have a happy cheerful word for everyone. Those are the encouragers. Those who have the ability to provide comfort, courage, help, and strength to someone who needs it. Thats what this word means. But look at:

(b) THE MODEL OF THE GIFT:

For there is a person in the NT who is a lovely model of this gift. Do you know his name Barnabas, which means the son of consolation. (Acts 4:36) " Well", you say "whats so great about that" Well, "consolation", is the word paracletos. Its the same word that the Holy Spirit is called by. "The Comforter". What does that mean It means encouragement. Barnabas was the encourager. Everywhere he went he had a genius for lifting the mood and spirit of the people. Barny was the encourager! Now I want you to see him exercising this gift in real life situations. Barnabas exercised this gift of encouragement in relation to:

1. The FINDING of New Friend:

When Paul came to Christ the church didn't trust him. So what Barny do He took Paul under his wing and introduced him to the members of the church. " But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way". (Acts 9:27) Barnabas wasn't going to hold a new convert at arms length. He realised that here was a man who needed a friend and Barnabas went out and became a friend to a very lonely new disciple. Do you know what the new Christian needs Encouragement! So often they find it difficult to break into our churches, especially if they come from a different background or culture. God gave us some Barnabas's in this fellowship who will reach out and find these people and bring them in. Can't you see, this big man Barnabas giving Saul a bearhug and saying, "Come on, brother, you're one of us now, we love you, God bless you."

2. The FOUNDING of a New Work:

You see, blessing had broken out in Antioch. People were being saved. (11:19) The city was being turned upside down for Christ. Word of this came back to Jerusalem the headquarters, back were the apostles were and they said, " Look a lot of Greeks are getting saved there in Antioch is this true fire or wild fire

Is this thing of God Should we approve it We had better send someone along to investigate!" Who do you think they sent You guessed it! Barnabas! And he went up there and what did he see He saw the grace of God. He saw the stamp of authenticity and authority upon the work. What did Barnabas do "He exhorted them all". (11:23) He encouraged the entire church!

Oh, things were a little different in Antioch, than in Jerusalem, but Barnabas could take the past and link it to the future, he could take the old and link it to the new. Two pastors were talking one day. One said to the other, "Do you have any committee's in your church"

He said, "Yes, we have standing committee's and sitting committee's and committee's lying down.

We have even a bucket committee". "Whats a bucket committee", said the other pastor. "Oh, he said, whenever we think of anything great, grand and glorious there's always a self-appointed bucket committee who come and pour cold water on it."

God deliver us from the bucket brigade and God gave us some Barnabas's who say", Yes, God's in it, it can and will be done."

3. The FOSTERING OF A NEW DISCIPLE:

He looks around in Antioch and he says, "This thing is too big for me. These believers need to be taught, they need someone to develop them. " Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus to seek Saul". (11:25) Do you know something A smaller man would not have done that! Some pastors, elders, preachers would have said,

" I'm not going to play second fiddle". But not Barnabas. " Saul come here a minute, they need a teacher in Antioch and you're the man to do the job."

And Saul goes back to Antioch and becomes such a proficient teacher of the Word that the disciples are called Christians first in Antioch. Now what did Barnabas do He found hidden gift and talent and he develops it, fosters it and brings it out! My, in every church there are folk like Paul. People who need to be found, encouraged, developed!

Oh, they have gifts, talents, but it takes a Barnabas to find them and foster them. Oh, I thank God for those encouraged me when I started to preach. My ... do you know someone who needs to be fostered and

developed Are you beginning to see now why they nicknamed Barnabas For he exercised this gift of encouragement in relation to 1:2:3:

4. The FAILING of a New Servant:

Missionary journey number two is about to begin. Barnabas and Saul discuss the possibility of taking John Mark a young man who on the first missionary journey quit. (13:13) I don't know why Mark dropped out. Perhaps he was sick, discouraged, homesick. Whatever Mark went home to Mummy. Now they are going on the second missionary journey and Paul says, "Come on Barnabas lets check on the churches", and Barnabas says, "Fine I'll go get Mark." " No", said Paul, "He failed once, he will again." " Yes", insisted Barnabas,

" He can and will succeed with encouragement".

" We're not taking Mark, hes a failure and quitter."

" But Paul, there's some good in that boy, lets give him another chance". We all know the outcome. Paul and Silas go there way. Barnabas and Mark go theres.

But its Barnabas thats takes the failure, the quitter, the coward and reaches down and lifts him up and puts his arms around him and says, " Come on Mark, you've got good stuff in you can do it".

I want to tell that's the Mark who wrote the Gospel. That's the same man you read of in (2 Tim 4:11) when Paul was about to be beheaded, he says to Timothy,

"Only Luke is with me, take Mark and bring him with thee for he is profitable to me for the ministry". Think of it, the one man in all the world that Paul wanted Mark. But aren't you glad that there was someone who found a failure salvaged him and fixed him up.

My, there are the failures, the Lots, the Samsons, the Jonahs, the John Marks, are you big enough to express a word and to extend a hand of encouragement to them.

Would you not like to be a Barnabas

1. The Foundational Ministry of the Church: That's Past:
2. The Fundamental Ministry of the Church: That's Present:
3. The Fortifying Ministry of the Church: That's Practical:

Proverbs says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit of it."

(18:21) Let's just be sure that everytime we speak, exercising our spiritual gifts we are under the Spirit's complete control.

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