

1 Corinthians 12:2

by Gerry Covenhoven

The Holy Spirit gives gifts to every believer, and every believer is responsible for the development and use of those gifts.

Duration: 45:05

Scripture: Acts 20:7, Romans 12:6

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts", "Bible Study"

Description

The video discusses the scriptural approach to Bible study and the importance of participation from multiple individuals. It emphasizes the idea of dialogue and interaction during these study sessions, rather than one person delivering a long message. The speaker also highlights the concept of spiritual gifts and how they are distributed by God according to each person's abilities. The video mentions the example of the Dunning Park Assembly in Detroit, where a speaker's committee helps individuals improve their speaking skills through feedback and guidance.

Transcript

1 Corinthians chapter 12, read verses 4-7. The subject is ministry in the church, or ministry to the church. We'd like to deal with the gift that the Spirit of God gives, and perhaps the Holy Spirit of God shall shed light upon these things that we consider this evening.

This is what we trust. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, reading verses 4-7. Now, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. I believe that the general tenor of what we're going to deal with tonight is quite well known to us.

Well known because of the position that we take that we refuse what is commonly called a one-man ministry. We recognize that the Spirit of God distributes gifts in His assembly, and that these gifts, then, as being distributed amongst various people, would exclude such a thought as a one-man ministry unless there was only one person who was capable of a platform ministry, and then that one person would perform that particular type of ministry. But ordinarily, and ideally at least, there should be a number of people that could share in the platform ministry, and certainly even if there's only one that is capable of platform ministry, there should be many others that would be capable of other types of ministry in the

assembly.

Now, what we would like to consider first is that the Holy Spirit of God gives gifts to every believer, at least one gift to every believer. We read this in verse 7 here where it says that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, or every person, to profit withal. And verse 11 of the same chapter says, "...but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man, or every person, severally as he will." So here, then, Paul is emphasizing this fact that the Holy Spirit of God gives these gifts to everyone.

Now, then, this is also emphasized in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 7 where it says, "...but unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of Christ." And likewise in 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 10, we find that Peter emphasizes this same proof where he says, "...as every man hath received a gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." So, then, the first thing that we would like to emphasize this evening is that every believer has at least some gift from God that is to be exercised in the assembly of God's people. Now, then, we want to look at this in different ways and notice that the Spirit of God distributes these gifts, first of all, as we read here in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, "...severally as he will." That is, dividing to each one as he will. Then the sovereign purpose of God Himself, who knows all things, who knows what each person is capable of, who knows what each person will do, He divides these gifts sovereignly.

But let us not, therefore, just sit back and say, Well, I'll wait until He hits me between the eyes and lets me know that way what gift I have. I think that it is very revealing in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 25, when the Lord Jesus Christ speaks here of a parable of the kingdom, and He says in verse 14, "...for the kingdom of heaven is like as a man traveling unto a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to every man according to his several abilities, and straightway took his journey." Dividing these talents to everyone according to his several abilities.

I think that is significant. It means that, although we have seen that the Spirit of God divides gifts severally as He will, He gives these gifts according to the ability of each one. In other words, I would suppose that a person that has a job choosing words and finds themselves very, very laconical in their ordinary conversation and whatnot would ordinarily not be an evangelist, for instance, who must have words to express himself and present the Gospel to the unfaithful.

So that the Spirit of God then takes one according to what we might call natural abilities, and yet they are supernatural abilities, really, and according to these abilities that one has, the Spirit of God gives a gift, superimposing that gift upon these abilities that one might have. It is not simply a case of dedicating our abilities to the Lord. It is a case of the Lord taking these abilities and superimposing a gift upon these abilities that they might then be used in His service.

So, the Spirit of God then gives gifts sovereignly, and the Spirit of God gives gifts according to our varying abilities, but then there's another side to it as well that I think we must always keep in mind, and that is that every believer is responsible for the development and use of gifts. Now, I think we get that in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 31, the last verse of this chapter, where the Apostle Paul says, but covet earnestly the best gift. Covet earnestly the best gift.

Here, human desire is brought into play in this general picture of the gift in the assembly. Covet earnestly the best gift. Now, the Apostle Paul wouldn't say that unless there was some purpose involved in it, because a person can covet the best gift and expect to receive some gift according to what he desires in

his heart.

This word covet simply means desire. Chapter 14, verse 1, emphasizes the same thing. Follow after charity and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

And then verse 39 of the same chapter, chapter 14, verse 39, says, Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Covet to prophesy. Desire a gift of God.

I believe that perhaps one reason we don't see more gifts in the assembly today is that there is not more desire. There is not sufficient desire on the part of many believers to have a gift or gifts that can be exercised amongst the people of God. So, we see then that this idea of gifts, the Holy Spirit giving gifts to everyone, depends upon varying factors.

First of all, the sovereign distribution of the Spirit of God. He gives, severally, as he will. But then, secondly, according to what we might call natural abilities that one has.

Abilities and inclinations that have developed within one in the course of growing up. And then, each one desiring gifts. We being responsible, then, to desire these gifts.

And then we suggest a few ways in which we can know what our gift or gifts may be. Because, oftentimes, this is a problem, especially with young people. They're wondering just what their gift might happen to be.

And I would suggest, then, that, first of all, it would be according to your natural abilities and inclinations. When someone, for instance, is thinking about learning to play the piano. Maybe someone else plays the piano very nicely, and because of that, they're enticed to want to learn to play the piano as well.

Well, you've got to try to see if you're going to be any good at it. You've got to practice. You've got to work at it.

And some people, then, will show that they do have an ability for it. And other people will just, after maybe a year or two of practice, will say, Well, I just don't have the ability. I'll give up.

All right, but at least you're trying. And I think that with spiritual gifts, we need that same thing. First of all, we can follow natural inclinations.

And if we have a natural inclination towards some particular thing, well, let us give ourselves to that and seek to develop it by the grace of God. But then another thing is that we can try different things. Now, this is more or less what we've been mentioning, but sometimes we might say, Well, you know, really, as far as teaching a Sunday school class is concerned, I just have no natural inclination toward it.

And yet, that in itself does not mean that you do not have a gift for it. And it might be very advisable to try it and see how you make out. You might find, very unexpectedly, that you have a real gift for it.

In teaching children of a certain age or boys or girls or something of the sort, getting across to them the meaning of the Word of God in their lives. So that we should definitely try different things. And if we find that we're a failure in one thing, all right, try something else.

Don't give up and get discouraged and say, Well, I don't have any gifts. But then, of course, where the Apostle Paul says that we should covet earnestly the best gifts, seeking spiritual gifts and whatnot, I believe that involved in a real desire to have spiritual gifts, there must be prayer. We must seek God's will.

We can ask Him for it. And I believe that coming before the Lord in prayer and asking Him for different gifts, that God then will, according to His sovereignty, give these different gifts. Now then, simply because we ask for a gift does not necessarily mean we're going to get that gift.

And yet I think that if we do definitely ask for a gift, that if the Lord doesn't give us that particular gift, He will give us another gift in His place. So that I think that we need to be definitely diligent in this in prayer, praying to God and asking that He would give us gifts. And if there's a lack of gifts among us, if we don't know what our gifts are, perhaps it's simply that we haven't prayed about them, and we haven't definitely laid before the Lord and asked Him to give us some particular gift.

Now, this leads us to consider the fact that gifts are very varied in the Word of God. I think too often our minds are perhaps confined to the thoughts of 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 8 through 10, and then perhaps Ephesians chapter 4, and we get that idea of gifts and think that those two sides of things are about all there is to the story of gifts. I believe that we find in the New Testament a word that is a wise word coming out that God gives.

It is the ability to express a thing in a wise way. To another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit. This is having studied the Word of God and then being able to keep or utter the Word of God and pass it on to others.

It is the word of knowledge. And then to another, faith by the same Spirit. Now, this is not the faith that we all need for salvation, but it is the faith that a man like George Mueller exercised, as by faith he depended upon God to supply not only his needs, but the needs of many orphans that he cared for.

There was a man who had a tremendous faith that developed as he went along. He didn't start out with caring for a thousand orphans. He started with just a few, and God provided little by little, increasing his faith and increasing the work that that man was able to do.

And then to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. Now, just a brief word here. Gifts of healing.

Notice that word gifts is in the plural. I don't believe we find anywhere in the Scripture that it speaks of the gifts of healing in the singular. The idea being that the Spirit of God never gave to anyone the gift of healing, that no one can say, I have the gift of healing, so he can go around any time laying his hands upon people and healing them.

I believe a close study of this matter would show that in the Scriptures we see that on different occasions, as the Spirit of God sovereignly walked through a person, he gave him gifts of healing on a particular occasion to heal different people, but then he might not have similar gifts on another occasion, so that there are gifts of healing that will come and go. Then, to another, the working of miracles, producing miraculous things, and oftentimes we are apt to think of these gifts as being only supernatural gifts, that is, healings and miracles being supernatural, and we fail to realize that also the word of knowledge and the word of wisdom and the faith and whatnot are supernatural, just as much as this is supernatural. Then, to another, discerning of spirits, that is, to being able to distinguish when a person is really speaking according to the Spirit of God, or according to some other spirit.

As John says, there are many deceivers going forth into the world, and we need in the church of God, even today, men who can distinguish between that which is a deception and that which is truly a truth. We won't elaborate on that. To another, diverse kinds of tongues.

Now, this, of course, is a big thing today with certain people. We hear about the charismatic movement, and they say that they have rediscovered, shall we say, the gift of tongues, people being able to speak in different languages, never having studied these languages. There is much testimony as to the falsity of some of these, as to demons working in others, and then as to whether, perhaps, the Spirit of God truly is giving them.

I would not, and I do not believe that. Look at it in chapter 13. It says that tongues are not for today.

Now, I'm not going to say either, though I'm sick of gifts of tongues because I believe it's one of the minor gifts, and I don't really believe that there's any particular profit unless you can do it, according to the teaching of chapter 14, as it lays out three distinct reasons for the giving of the gift of tongues, and I believe that these things are often lacking in what is practiced today under that name. Then, to another, the interpretation of tongues. And, here again, some that claim to have the interpretation of tongues, according to things that I have read, have shown that they do not have the gift of interpretation of tongues.

They think they have. Well, speaking uncharitably, they deceive themselves because a person gives a message in tongues, and then you tape it, and you ask someone that claims they have the gift of interpreting tongues to listen to it, and they say, well, that says such and such, and then someone else listens to it, and they say, well, that means another thing entirely distinct and different, and you get entirely distinct and different interpretations then, in that way, from one given message. Well, words have particular meaning.

They can't mean two entirely or three entirely different things, and so that there's a lot of self-perception, I'm afraid, in these various things. But here, at any rate, the apostle Paul lists nine things that show a variety of gifts. But then, moving into verse 28 of this same chapter, he looks at it in another way, and here he speaks of some gifts.

There are apostles, there are prophets, there are teachers, there are miracles, then gifts of healings, help, government, diversities of tongues. Now, then, here it would seem that at least these two, help and government, were not at all included in the first list. And help and government, I suppose, was what we would call deacons and elders today.

Now, of course, this is scripturally. Scriptural terms, deacons and elders, are spoken of scripturally. But here are help and government.

That would be the same as deacons and elders. Moving on to Ephesians chapter 4, we see another way of looking at these gifts, as there's a certain repetition here. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 11.

He, the Lord Jesus Christ, gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. Now, here the evangelist is mentioned, which was not mentioned in the previous list. And then the pastors and teachers, emphasizing, it appears to me, that a pastor is a teacher, and a teacher is a pastor, or at least should be.

And these, then, would have that word of knowledge that he speaks of, and would be a teacher, that are given in the list of 1 Corinthians chapter 12. But then, in concluding this particular line of things, notice with me in Romans chapter 12, because here is a fourth list of gifts. Romans chapter 12, verses 6 through 8, the apostle mentions seven things.

He says, "...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." Now, prophecy we've had before. Ministering, this well might be deaconing, help that we saw before. It is the same word.

And then, he that teacheth on teaching, he that exhorteth on exhortation, another line of things that was not given in the other list, he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity. Did you ever think of giving as being a gift from God? And yet, that's what the apostle does in this list. He shows that there are some that might be well-off financially, and that God gives them, then, a gift for giving.

Now, unhappily, there are some people that are well-off financially that are real stingy with their money, and yet the Spirit of God can use such and give them a real gift in giving so that they can give liberally and with simplicity. Then, he that ruleth with diligence, this would be the same as the government that we read of there in 1 Corinthians 12, 28. He that ruleth, it would be, I believe, the same as the pastors and teachers given in Ephesians chapter 4. Then, he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness.

Did you ever think of simply showing mercy as being a gift of God? And yet, this is one thing that the apostle meant, as being a gift that God gives. So, we see, then, that gifts are very varied, that they are quite distinct to one from the other. Some of these gifts are used in what we might call a public way, a platform way, and many other gifts are not used in a platform way at all.

So, let us really keep in mind that to have a gift, it does not mean that you must have something that can be exercised publicly from the platform. There are many other gifts that will never be exercised from the platform. They were never intended for that sort of thing.

And let us remember, too, that the apostle says in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 that God gives greater honor to the lesser things. The things that appear to us to be of lesser importance are really of perhaps greater importance in the assembly of God's people. So, then, there are many different gifts, and one thing that we should keep in mind, too, is that all of these gifts are interdependent.

They are dependent one upon another. Every gift needs other gifts, because if all were evangelists, for instance, we can literally see that there would be many tremendous lacks in the assembly, and no assembly could function with everybody just being evangelists. For instance, if there were only two or three or four different gifts in an assembly, it would be tremendously hampered.

With this very varied number of gifts that we've been considering briefly this evening, we must recognize that all of these gifts are, then, dependent one upon the other, and so we all need each other. But, then, all of these gifts are to be used for the common good. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 7, in the King James Version, it says, "...but the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." These words, to profit withal, are translated in the Revised Standard Version, for the common good, and I think it brings it out very beautifully that gifts are not for the exaltation of an individual.

They are to bring blessing to others. They're for the common good. They're to be used for the good of the assembly, and not only for the good of the assembly within itself, but the total testimony of the assembly in the world around as well.

And some gifts will be used in the assembly, and others will be used outside of the assembly, but they are all for the common good. Now, this involves something else that we find here in Ephesians chapter 4. I don't remember if we got around to this one time that we spoke on Ephesians chapter 4, but it is simply

this. Every person that has a gift, or gifts, is responsible before God to seek to develop those same gifts in others.

Now, let us read this, Ephesians 4, verses 11 and 12, "...and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the professing of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Now, we noticed on a previous occasion that the commas in verse 11 really should not be there. It is simply that he gave some apostles, and he gave some prophets, and he gave some evangelists, and he gave some pastors and teachers. He gave some of all these different gifts.

It's not that he gave some of these gifts to one church, and others of these gifts to another church. Take out the commas and you get a better sense. But then in verse 12, we've got to remove the commas here as well.

And here where it says, "...for the perfecting of the saints," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ gave these gifts of verse 11, "...for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ," would be a better way of translating it, because rather than having one Greek word occurring three times, as we find one English word occurring three times here, three different phrases, each of them introduced by the word for, in the Greek there are two different words, the word for used for the first for, and the word eight used for the next two for, so that it could properly be translated that these gifts were given them "...for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ." In other words, these gifts are given by the Lord Jesus Christ to the church in order that these gifts might perfect the saints unto the work of the ministry. That these Christians, then, might engage in the work of the ministry. They're to develop gifts amongst the others.

Those who have gifts, then, are responsible before God to seek that these gifts should be developed in others. I believe that this is one of the primary responsibilities of elders in an assembly. Now, of course, speaking of the work of elders, it is vast, it is varied.

There are many things that elders have to do, but one thing that elders have to do is to be looking over the assembly and to be praying for and with the assembly for the raising up and developing of gifts in the assembly. I believe that in every assembly the elders should take the young people especially, I mean taking for granted that they've already done this with the older people, but taking the young people especially, one by one perhaps, and going with them prayerfully over what are their natural abilities, what gifts do they think that they might have, what gifts do they think that they would desire for the work of God, and to seek to pray with them and encourage them in the developing of gifts, and thinking about this, what gifts are missing in this assembly, what gifts are needed here that we don't have at the present time and are handicapped to us because of their lack. And, in that way, seeking to pray with these people and seek to encourage them and to do all that they can, and really talking these things over.

How can we develop these gifts amongst us? It requires definite prayer and it requires definite thinking and analyzing the situation and seeking to encourage others to get on with this business of developing gifts. In order that it might be truly manifested, every Christian in the assembly has at least some gift for the work of the Lord. Now, I would emphasize again, these gifts are very varied and we should never think that they all have to be platform gifts.

In the Dunning Park assembly in Detroit, some of you I know have heard of this, but they have what they call a speaker's committee so that every brother from the assembly that would take a meeting starts out by

being asked to take a Wednesday night meeting. And, after taking that Wednesday night meeting, he meets with the speaker's committee. And the speaker's committee then goes over his message with him to point out good points, to show what was well done, and to show what could have been improved on.

And then, sometime later, they'll ask him to take another Wednesday night meeting and meet with him again. And continue working with this individual as they're working with other individuals at the same time until finally this individual has become proficient enough in speaking at the Wednesday night meeting when, after all, the Christians are there and they're understanding this as a young person that is developing gifts and they will be quite lenient with him. And then, as this person goes on developing the gift, they'll say, all right, now, you're sufficiently proficient, let's move you up to take a Sunday night meeting.

And the Sunday night meeting is also a meeting where, almost invariably, there are all Christians there, but perhaps with a different type of message that would be given or something of the sort, but that person then moves up to a Sunday night meeting and, after every meeting, meets with the speaker's committee in order that they might be continually working on developing this gift and getting suggestions from others, and there's no favoritism shown. And everyone that's going to speak knows that he's going to have to meet with the speaker's committee afterwards. Until finally that person becomes sufficiently proficient in this, according to the feeling of the speaker's committee, they feel that the Spirit of God is really speaking through this person, all right, then move them to Sunday morning when they get strangers in from the outside.

So that there is a gradual progression and a definite developing of gifts. I think that the general plan, and we may not do it in exactly that same way, but the general plan has much to commend it, and that it is scripturally based in that those with gifts in the assembly are responsible to see and to help and train other gifts in the assembly. And this, as I say, is one of the principal jobs of elders in the assembly to work with others and see that they develop their gifts.

Now then, as we have stated, not all gifts are platform gifts. Therefore, although there will not be a one-man ministry, ideally speaking, unless this is all that the Spirit of God has raised up in a given assembly at any particular time, there will ideally be a plurality of them. But it does mean this, that even though there is a plurality of them, it does not mean every man has a platform gift.

It does not mean that every man must take his turn preaching the gospel, or doing this, or doing that, or doing the other thing. I believe that what the Scriptures present is that as far as platform gift is concerned, though there is not a one-man ministry, there is a stated ministry. Now, notice with me in the Acts chapter 13.

I believe that this is brought out here in just one verse. Acts chapter 13, verse 1. It says, Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers as Barnabas, and Simeon, which was called Nider, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Mannion, which had been brought up with Herod, the tetrarch, and Saul. Here, then, are five men in the Antioch assembly who were evidently the public speakers.

They were the men that spoke publicly. They were the men that had the particular gift of being teachers and prophets, so that they were the public speakers. Now, there you have it.

There were five of them that had developed at this early date in the life of the church, these particular gifts. Now, this does not mean that that's all they're going to have. I'm sure that these men were seeking that

others would be raised up, and that, frankly, on this occasion, the Spirit of God is saying, Now send two of them away on a missionary journey, and it's going to leave them with only three, and they're going to feel their need all the more, that more be raised up.

But what we're trying to bring out is that it would appear from here, then, that as far as those who have gifts for public speaking is concerned, it is neither one man nor every man, but it is a stated number. Certain ones were recognized as having that gift, or those gifts that will be used for public ministry. I believe this brings us to this.

If, for instance, we say that Sunday morning, because of some strangers that come in, called commonly the family Bible hour, is going to be a gospel meeting, we will use at the gospel meeting the one or ones who have the gift of evangelism. I know an assembly in Michigan that had this problem for a while. They were getting some neighbors in, but they were using, I don't know how many, of the different brethren of the assembly to speak.

They weren't in a large city where there were a number of assemblies where they could draw from. There was only one assembly in this particular city, and so they were quite dependent upon their local gifts. And as neighbors would come in, and the different brethren would take part, well, it wasn't what appealed to the neighbors.

It wasn't what brought the neighbors back. So, the neighbors would come once or maybe twice if they were quite indulgent, and then they wouldn't come anymore because there just wasn't being anything said that was meeting their need and was getting across to them. Until finally that assembly woke up and they said, well, now wait a minute.

There is one particular brother here who really does have a gift for preaching the gospel. So then, what they did, they simply recognized what the Spirit of God had done among them and did not try to violate what the Spirit of God had done among them. They said, this is the brother who has the gift for preaching the gospel.

So then, if we do not have any visiting speaker who has a gift for preaching the gospel, we will ask this particular local brother, and he will be preaching three or four Sundays perhaps a month at the family Bible hour. Some people might show up their hands in horror and say, it's one-man ministry! Oh, no. It's what the Spirit of God raised up in that assembly for that particular type of ministry.

At other meetings, others would be ministering according to their particular gift. But as far as the proclamation of the gospel was, there was one man in that assembly who the Spirit of God had raised up to preach the gospel. So, in calling on that man every time to preach the gospel, you're recognizing what the Spirit of God has done, and you're abiding by his judgment.

You're saying, all right, you've only given us one. Let us continue to pray. Let us seek to encourage others to develop this gift.

But in the meantime, we will use this one. Now, is that scriptural, or is it not? I believe it's very scriptural. But then, another thing that we should keep in mind.

Before I state this, let's read it from 1 Timothy, chapter 5. 1 Timothy, chapter 5, verses 17 and 18. Let the elders that rule well... Now, we notice that these elders were those who were raised up to govern, to rule. They are the pastors and teachers.

I think you'll get this as you study through what the scriptures have to say as to elders. So, it says here, Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture says, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, and the laborer is worthy of his reward.

Now, I just ask you, what do these two verses mean to you? Do you get any sense out of them? Does it mean anything specific? It seems to me that he's speaking here of the possibility of two different categories, shall we say, of elders. Not that we will place one category above the other, not at all. The two categories are equally elders, but he is speaking of some elders that should be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.

Now, what would be this double honor? I think that verse 18 explains what the double honor is. Now, I can just see the air beginning to drift along the back of my mind. For the scripture says, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, and the laborer is worthy of his reward.

Now, then, this is simply saying that there may be an elder or elders in any local assembly that would be supported by that local assembly. Now, here some are going to immediately say, Well, that means a paid ministry. Well, what's wrong with a paid ministry? Doesn't the apostle Paul defend such a thing as this, can't he, in chapter 9, and say that he that preaches the gospel shall live of the gospel? And yet, we have gone to such an extreme trying to avoid a one-man ministry that what we end up with is completely throwing out the baby with the bathwater so that we don't have anyone in the assembly who could possibly be classified as a paid elder or a paid pastor in the assembly.

And yet, that, to my mind, is exactly what the apostle Paul is speaking about here to Timothy. He says, now, there are elders. Well, now, then, if one is doing well, laboring in the word and doctrine, he should be counted worthy of double honor, because what I mean by this is that the Old Testament scriptures say, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn.

As he treads out the corn, he should be able to eat corn as he treads it out. And the laborer is worthy of his reward. Taken from the New Testament, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, as to those that he sent forth, that they were to receive their pay for what they did.

Now, then, of course, we say, well, now, wait a minute. Aren't there a lot of dangers in this? Oh, yes, of course there are dangers in this. You know, there are dangers in a lot of things that the word of God brings, but that doesn't mean that we're supposed to throw them out.

We're supposed to seek to carry them in a balance with all of those things so that we can avoid the dangerous part, and we can get the benefit out of these things. More than I know that some assemblies, for instance, have called a pastor, let's say. Use that terminology, the terminology that many churches use.

They call the pastor. So, they've got a pastor, and they arrange with him a certain monthly salary that they will give, and they work out details as to what this particular person is to do. So, what happens? Well, what has happened in many cases that I think is very unscriptural is that this assembly, then, becomes entirely dependent upon that person to take the meeting.

This assembly, then, instead of seeking that that person should develop gifts amongst the others, says, all right, we've got you here. You do the preaching for us. We've got you here.

You do the visitation for us. We've got you here. You do the work for us.

That's what we're paying you for. Now, that is where the system is done unscripturally. But, if you can get a man, maybe get part-time.

Maybe he's got a part-time job or something, but you feel that he has a gift that could be used in the assembly, and so you arrange with him he has a part-time job. All right, he's going to work with the assembly part-time, and the assembly is going to support him part-time, or maybe the assembly is going to support him full-time. The work is big enough for this sort of thing, and so you say, all right, I don't think it's entirely wrong to give him a stipulated amount every month, but then what this man is supposed to do is what we've been seeing tonight.

He is supposed to be working with the other elders for the development of gifts in the assembly. Maybe at the beginning there's no particular gift, and they say, brother, we just don't have it, and the assembly is beginning to crumble because of it. All right, so maybe at the beginning that man starts off, but then after a while he says, no, look, I want you to begin to be responsible for the weeknight meeting.

And then after a while longer he says, all right, now I want you to begin to be responsible for the Sunday night meeting. And then after a while he says, all right, now I want you to begin to take some responsibility in the Sunday morning meeting. You see, it's not that he's going to set himself up, if he knows what his scriptural responsibilities are, it's not that he's going to set himself up to make the assembly dependent upon him.

What he is supposed to do is work himself out of a job. He's doing the work that he's trying to train others to do the same work, so that eventually they can do the work that he has been doing. Now, I know that there's an assembly in Long Island that called a man to be a pastor, and they had this arrangement for a while, until finally that man left.

He just felt it wasn't scriptural. And after going on a while, that assembly finally felt, well, we just aren't getting along well. And so they called another man to be their pastor, because the first man who was acting as a pastor there, a paid pastor, had not been developing gifts in others.

The same thing happened down in St. Louis. An assembly arranged with a young man to come and be with them as a pastor, and so he became known as the pastor of the assembly, and he did the vast majority of the preaching. And after he moved away, why, that assembly just felt that they couldn't get along without somebody like that, because for ten years that brother had been doing all the preaching in the assembly, practically all of it at least.

Well, of course, there's the abuse of the thing, and yet simply because there's an abuse in the thing does not mean that, basically, it's not scriptural but should be done in a different way. I believe, in fact, I get no other sense out of this. If you get some other sense out of this, I'd like you to tell me, because I want to be clear and I want to be scriptural on this.

But if you, in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 17 and 18, teach something other than that there may be an elder, a pastor, because elders are pastors, after all. Here's a word that we hardly ever use, and yet it's perfectly scriptural. And I think that it's perfectly scriptural to speak of the pastors of an assembly, because, after all, it's not that we have a pastor, nor is it that we don't have any pastors.

We have a number of pastors, because the elders are the pastors. So that here, this one who, amongst others, may be the other pastors, are men who have their jobs every day, that they're working to earn their living in secular jobs, so-called, and this man is dedicating his whole time to the work of the Lord with that local assembly. Well, naturally, he would be supported by that local assembly.

Now, don't think I'm trying to...I'm looking for a job for myself, but I just want to bring this out to you that this, after all, is something that appears to me to be very scriptural. One more thing that I would like to bring out in this relation to gifts, going back to 1 Corinthians chapter 14, and the use of gifts in the assembly. Now, then, here's something that we have not done this evening entirely, but I certainly think we should do.

1 Corinthians chapter 14, verses 29 and 30. Let the prophet speak two or three, and let the others judge. Please put an S on the end of that word, other, in your King James Version, because it should be in the plural.

So, let the others judge, or, as it says in some versions, let the others pay attention. But just pay attention isn't sufficient. It means let them analyze what is being said so that they can comment on what is being said.

Then verse 30 says, If anything be revealed to another that spitteth by, let the first hold his teeth. Now, then, this idea of if anything is revealed to another that spitteth by, let the first hold his teeth. Any of you that have the Living Bible, please know that that is absolutely wrong in the way it's translated here in this verse.

Because the Living Bible says that if anything is revealed to one who is sitting by, let him not interrupt. Which, as I understand it, is exactly the opposite of what it's really saying. If anything is revealed to one that's sitting down there, in some way that person is to indicate, Look, I've got something to say on this subject.

I would like to comment, I would like to question, I would like to add this thought, or I'm wondering about this, something of the sort. So then, not let that person not interrupt, but let this person keep quiet in order that that person can have his say. In order that in the assembling, in the meeting of the assembly, now then, I do not recommend this for the family Bible hour, for instance, where there will be the proclamation of the gospel as a general rule, but where there is a meeting of the assembly for a Bible study of some sort, I think that this is the structural approach, where you have a number of people participating, not simply one taking a 45-minute message and filling up all the time, but a number of people participating, and with participation from the audience.

In other words, it not being that, Well, look, we've got three speakers for the night, and that's the limit, but if there's any comment, any question from the audience, that they should come in then with it, and that this idea of dialogue is tremendously pleased to the Acts chapter 20 for the concluding verse that we would like to consider this evening, and verse 7, the Acts chapter 20.

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