*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 18 - 23

“Diversity of the Spirit’s Gifts”

**Monday, October 18 Ephesians 4:7-13**

*“Christ is the one who gave gifts to the church”*

Every Christian shares in Christ’s gifts given to his body, the church, by the Spirit. No one is without a gift; thus no one can be considered useless or negligible in the life of the church. One church puts it this way in her charter: “On the ship of the church there are no passengers; all are members of the crew.” By discussing the diversity of gifts, Paul is not forsaking his theme of unity expressed in the first six verses of this chapter. Unity is not uniformity, and personal uniqueness is not discouraged. A variety of gifts is needed for the church to do its ministry, and every believer is enabled to make his or her unique contribution to the whole.

In the constitution of the Roman Catholic Church which came from the Second Vatican Council is this sentence: “By the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building of the body of Christ.” While different people have different gifts, there is no cause for spiritual pride.

*I praise you for all your gifts to your church, Lord, that equip us and build us up. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 19 1 Corinthians 12:4-11**

*“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts”*

In this passage Paul picks up on a problem that the church faced, created by the seeming disparity in the nature of the gifts. Some of the gifts were quite spectacular, and those who possessed them had a tendency to be proud. Those gifts that were exercised in the context of worship gave high visibility and prominence to those who possessed them, and it is easy to see, knowing the very human tendency to put self forward, how these individuals might begin to think that they were more important.

On the other hand, some of the members were given gifts that were exercised in less dramatic ways – in a servant role, for example – and it is easy to see how, because of the quiet and unseen way in which they did their part, they might wonder if their gift was important and if they were really needed in the church. Paul’s insistence that spiritual gifts had a common source and a common purpose addressed the issue of false comparison of gifts. After all, the gifts had not been earned but freely given by Christ through the Holy Spirit.

*Lord, help me to be grateful for how you have gifted me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 20 Romans 12:6-11**

*“If your gift is . . . use it!”*

Paul does not spend time describing the functions of the different gifts and the corresponding responsibilities but rather concentrates on the spirit in which the gifts are exercised. His overriding concern is that the believers utilize to the full the grace of God in their life together. To do this, they must overcome all potential attitudinal problems. The only way for this to happen is through the individual believer’s accepting Paul’s instruction to behave in a manner that befits Jesus’ command that we love one another.

There are those who have a special gift of giving and they should give generously out of love for God and others. Leaders who see their abilities as divinely granted gifts and their charges as the flock of God will lead with loving care. Those who are particularly endowed with the ability to show mercy will give of their time and energy because of their love for their neighbor. The giver will not give stingily, the leader will not lead autocratically, and the merciful will not show mercy grudgingly.

*May I serve you enthusiastically, Lord, using everything you have given me. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 18 - 23

“Diversity of the Spirit’s Gifts”

**Thursday, October 21 1 Peter 4:10-11**

*“Each one has received a gift”*

Peter is concerned about ministry. He has written about such important subjects as being serious and watchful in our prayers, practicing hospitality, and above all things, loving one another. He now turns his attention to the important area of practical ministry within the Body of Christ. First he says we are to minister to one another because “each one has received a gift.” The word translated as “gift,” *charisma*, denotes a very special kind of gift. It comes from the root word *charis* which means grace. Peter is writing about a “grace gift” or a spiritual gift which comes from the Lord.

Peter states that each of us has received at least one spiritual gift. These gifts of grace are to be distinguished from natural talents which have been given to all of us through our natural birth. Spiritual gifts are grace gifts of the Holy Spirit given to those who have been born again of the Holy Spirit. When we use the gifts God has given us, God’s grace is able to flow through us to those around us.

*Minister through me, Holy Spirit, by the spiritual gift God has given me. Amen.*

**Friday, October 22 1 Corinthians 12:27-31**

*“In the church God has appointed . . .”*

Paul’s main point in this passage is that there is no gift intended for all believers. The rhetorical questions in verses 29-30 all employ the Greek word *me*, which demonstrates that the implied answer to each question is, “No.” A person sent out on a mission is an “apostle,” in this case a divinely commissioned one. Christians would later come to call such people missionaries or church-planters. A “prophet” is a person who speaks the Word of God as it applies to a particular situation, while a “teacher” more generally communicates a fixed body of information.

To take “first,” “second,” and “third” in verse 28 as ranking in significance would violate the whole point of Paul’s discussion of spiritual gifts. Instead, they should be understood as a chronological order. To establish a local congregation requires a church planter. Then the proclamation of God’s Word must ensue. Next teachers supplement the preaching by following Jesus’ instruction to “teach them to obey all I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). Only at this point does a viable Christian fellowship exist to enable all the other gifts to come into play.

*Thank you for gifting the church, Lord, so together we can do your work. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 23 1 Corinthians 13:1 – 14:1**

*“Now I will show you the most excellent way”*

More important than all the gifts is love. In this chapter Paul makes the point that without love the gifts are worthless. This truth is driven home in verses 1-3 where Paul claims that without love even the most exemplary use of a particular gift profits a believer nothing. To speak in tongues without love is a meaningless noise. To have spiritual insight (the gift of prophecy) or the faith to work miracles, but to exercise these gifts without love, would do no good. Even the extreme example of giving all we have to the poor, would be of no value without love.

Having shown the importance of love in a negative sense by speaking of the uselessness of spiritual gifts practiced without this greatest of all virtues, Paul goes on in verses 4-7 to give a powerful definition of love, before returning in verses 8-12 to indicate the limitation of spiritual gifts: they are for this life only, whereas love is eternal. In summary, verse 13 proclaims that when all else has passed away, including the spiritual gifts, only faith, hope and love will remain.

*May love for you and others, Lord, always be my highest aim. Amen.*