**Spiritual Gifts and the Trinity - BD25-02**

This morning we’re looking at spiritual gifts and the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Satan is seeking to frustrate the production of divine good in the life of the individual believer. We are seeking to explain how God works in service in this day so that you will understand what Satan is trying to do in your life in order to frustrate this—to get you active and running around and very involved in church things and Christian activities, all of which God rejects because it’s nice and it’s good but it’s human good and not divine good, and there is a great, great difference.

**Spirituality**

The church age is unique in several respects. It is total distinct from the age of the law. Spirituality in the church age is being filled with the Spirit, and I trust you understand that now. It’s the result of confession to the Father of all your known sins. The Word of God tells us that if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us all our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness which covers the unknown sins too.

So, spirituality is the result of being filled with the Spirit and that comes from the confession of all known sins. Spirituality and carnality, therefore, are mutually exclusive. You are either spiritual or you are carnal. You are not part one and part the other. Now the emotions of joy may result from this status of spirituality, but your emotions of joy are not the means to spirituality. When you are in the plan of God, there will be joy in your life. Everything will not be pleasant in your life, but there will be a sense of joy and of satisfaction and of blessing in that which you’re doing. We don’t mean to imply that there are no emotional aspects to the Christian life. But we are saying that your emotions are not the criterion by which you judge whether you are spiritual. Some people think they’re spiritual because they are happy. Well anybody can go out and take a shot of some drug and get happy. Does that make him spiritual? Not at all.

Spirituality is not the result of something the believer does, something the believer says, or something the believer wears. Some people are forever confusing the results with the cause of spirituality. You are not spiritual because you do certain things, like go to prayer meeting and teach Bible classes and so on. You are not spiritual because you say something, like “praise the Lord,” and “God bless you,” and “amen,” and “hallelujah,” and “right on, brother.” That will not make you spiritual. It might be the expression of spirituality, but it will not make you spiritual. Nor will you be spiritual because of what you wear. Your spirituality will have an expression in what you wear, but that will not make you spiritual.

So Christian service is producing divine good in this unique church age in which a spiritual believer exercises his spiritual gifts. We distinguish, therefore, between spirituality and your spiritual gifts. You are not spiritual because you’re on the job exercising your particular spiritual gift either. It’s necessary for you to be spiritual if your spiritual gift is going to produce divine good. Christian service is producing divine good in the unique church age as spiritual believers exercise their spiritual gifts.

**Ignorance**

1 Corinthians 12: 1, we found last week, expressed the fact that the greatest problem in the Christian life is ignorance—ignorance relative to spiritual things. In this particular concept, it’s ignorance about spiritual gifts. The mind is to act as the aggressor of our souls. It is to act as the aggressor toward our emotions, and our emotions (like a right woman toward her right man) are to act as responder. When the emotions act as aggressor, the directive mind has to follow. Then, instead of our minds being the leadership of our soul, our emotions have taken over the leadership. So Christian service and living is perverted under this condition into human good, and into emotional controls and expressions, and into improper use of spiritual gifts.

When you find people running around and saying, “I talk in tongues,” and when you find people running around and pretending that they are miracle healers, you know immediately that you are dealing with someone whose emotions have taken over his mind and the emotions have taken over leadership of the soul. That emotion is being led by the old sin nature. Out of the old sin nature pours, remember, not only sin, but also all of this human good. Now if you will get hold of that, it will enable you to look at big name religious leaders in our society who are miracle healers and who produce vast enterprises that are very successful in terms of human success. You will be able to understand that they are producing good, but not good which God accepts. It is good that God rejects, because it is good coming from the strong side of the old sin nature. God says that all of that is of human righteousness, and in His sight it is a filthy rags, and He rejects it.

1 Corinthians 12:1 says that all that is possible is frustrated by ignorance in the directive side of our minds. That’s why learning Bible doctrine is the greatest virtue of the Christian life. Don’t ever let anybody tell you that anything else is more important. Nothing is more important than learning Bible doctrine on a daily basis. This is how you come to the mind of God. When you have that, everything else falls in line. When you don’t have that, you’re going to fall right back onto the production of your old sin nature.

1 Corinthians 12:2 spoke about the problem of spiritual ignorance among unbelievers. It caused them to worship false gods. The communication of sound doctrine enables us, as unbelievers, to be saved. Then the exercise of spiritual gifts, Paul implies, is not to be patterned on the ecstatics of their heathen days when they worshipped these dumb idols.

1 Corinthians 12:3 tells about the work of the Holy Spirit in removing spiritual ignorance. It says He creates a receptive will by regeneration toward Jesus Christ so that a person no longer calls Christ accursed. It also says that it gives him an understanding concerning the deity of Jesus Christ, so that the person calls him Lord (and this word “kurios” means deity). Satan seeks to keep the Christian ignorant concerning the use of his spiritual gifts, and by causing him to be ignorant on this during the church age—to be frustrated in the Lord’s service.

**Diversity**

Now, this morning we are going to look at the diversity among believers. There are personality differences among Christians. No two Christians are alike, but all Christians share a common relationship to God. All are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. All possess an old sin nature which produces sins and human good. All are permanently in union with Jesus Christ so they are forever saved.

Christians, however, have varied individual expression of their common spiritual heritage. And, I’m happy to tell you this morning that it is not the goal of the Christian life to place every one of you into a common mold of conduct and practice. Anytime anybody attempts to get all of the Christians acting and doing and wearing clothes alike and saying things alike—anytime someone sets out to do that, he sets up a false basis of spirituality. That’s where the idea comes from that spirituality is what you do, what you say, or what you wear. Spirituality is all known sins confessed and being filled with the Spirit. That’s a condition of spirituality. What you do with it is something else, but you are now in a condition usable to God the Holy Spirit, when you are filled or controlled by Him.

Much training that we have for the Christian life that we give our young people is merely teaching them about certain taboos and certain conventions—certain things you don’t do, and certain things that are acceptable practice. Anytime a new Christian comes into a local assembly, maybe he’s just born again, he understands he’s a Christian, and he’s looking around, and he spots what Christians don’t do and what they do. The first thing that comes to his mind is that that’s what makes a spiritual Christian. “I’ll just watch the crowd. What they don’t do here, I won’t do. The things they do, I’ll do.” Pretty soon he’s picking up mannerisms and mimicking what he sees and avoiding what he sees that we don’t do. These things, however, are a matter of personal choice, personal taste, and personal expression. It does not make you spiritual or carnal. The taboos may represent commendable ideals, but they do not make you spiritual and they do not make you carnal.

What God wants you to do instead is to keep your personality and its expressions. As a spiritual Christian, you are to grow into spiritual maturity where your practice conforms to the will of God. We are to keep our natural characteristics, but we are to produce inner changes from the filling of the Spirit. What God wants you to do is to be your natural self, and to bring about certain inherent changes in your mental attitude. That’s the thing that the Christian life is out to do. It’s not to change you outwardly. It’s to change you inwardly in your mental attitude through doctrine. Now, when your mental attitude changes, your outward conduct in many respects will indeed change. However, it will be a permanent kind of change. It will not be trying to teach you a false spirituality which will preclude you from using your spiritual gift.

You need to understand the condition than enables you to function with your spiritual gift. This is what Satan wants to keep you ignorant of. He wants to give you a totally false picture of what is spiritual. Once you have that, you can’t do anything that God accepts—not one thing, because you can’t get to the first stage, which is spirituality. So, it’s essential that you understand that this is an inward change of the mind. Furthermore, it is essential to the private exercise of the believer’s priesthood that other believers mind their own priesthood. When somebody gets nosy about what you’re going to do with your priesthood, I suggest that you put out smoke screens. Just send them right down the wrong alley and let him stumble around and tell all of his friends, and make him look ridiculous. That will teach him, perhaps, to mind his own priesthood next time.

There are certain differences in the role that the various members of the Godhead play relative to these spiritual gifts. Christians do have certain differences. Beginning at 1 Corinthians 12:4, the apostle Paul tells us about these. First of all, in verse 4 we have diversities and the Holy Spirit. “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.”

The word “diversity” means differences which arise from the distribution of something to different persons. Here the issue is different spiritual abilities to different Christians. The word “gifts” here in the Greek is “charisma.” “Charisma” means gift, spiritual gift, and different Christians have different spiritual gifts. The word “charisma” comes from the word “charis,” which means “grace.” This means something that is a favor, something that’s received apart from any earning or deserving on the part of the recipient. The word “charis” is part of the word “charisma,” because spiritual gifts are grace gifts. These are things that God the Holy Spirit gives the individual believer at the moment of salvation in order that he may have the means whereby he may engage in Christian service. These are not rewards, but they are presents of grace. They are simply spiritual abilities that you receive at the moment you receive Christ—when you accepted Christ as your personal savior. You are not spiritual because you possess these gifts or because you use your gifts. These are not your natural abilities. You were born with natural abilities and natural capacities. We shall see that your natural capacities come under certain spiritual gifts—that God the Holy Spirit will use them for spiritual service. However, your natural abilities with which you were born are not what we’re talking about. This is something you did not possess until the moment that you came into the new birth, the new life. At that moment, God gave you one of maybe 20 different spiritual gifts, some of which continue in this age and some which do not. We’re going to look at them in the next few weeks, one by one.

Please don’t fall for some spiritual success story that tells you how someone got or successfully exercised a spiritual gift, in the process of which he got famous and maybe rich. You should get pretty tired of those stories. God will use you with your spiritual gift to maximum production if you meet the conditions. You need to get over the idea that there was somebody who had some characteristic, some temperament, or he found some key. And because he did that, he became something stupendous in the Lord’s work. That is not true. God the Holy Spirit gives you this gift, He directs this gift, and He controls this it entirely. The problem is to understand and to be cooperative with Him.

**Identifying Your Spiritual Gift**

Now it is necessary that you identify your spiritual gift. This will allow maximum use of it, and you won’t be wasting time on the wrong service. This is a tragedy—for you to not know your spiritual gift and to go all of your life doing Christian service that is not commensurate with your gift, and you’re wasting your time. Serving the Lord is a matter of knowing your gift. It’s wrong for you and me to encourage somebody to serve in a way in which they do not evidence a gift. It is bad for someone to stand up and speak in a testimony meeting, for example, and they try perhaps to explain a portion of the Bible, and they confuse you, and everything comes out backwards: It’s wrong for you to go up to that person and say, “It was so nice to hear a word from you tonight.” Instead, it would be kinder for you to tell them, “Listen, I didn’t understand what you were saying tonight. You confused m. I was bored, and I’m sorry I came.” You would advance the cause of the Lord’s work. But you want to be popular, you see, so we don’t want to do that. We encourage Christians to serve the Lord in some capacity where they lack the spiritual gift required to do that.

Serving the Lord, incidentally, is not arrived at through some momentous decision. You may go to churches where the preacher has a mellifluous voice, and he is giving a great exposition that constitutes nothing more than some devotional inspirational ideas. Or, if he has a good speaking voice, one of the biggest tricks of the professional preacher is to get up and recite Scripture. Right away we think here’s an authority. However, we go home and wonder what we learned—what do I know of my personal life that advances me in my relationship to God? Absolutely nothing. However, at the end of that service, after the emotions (what were preached to and what were appealed to) have been manipulated, then you are called to raise your hand, to come forward, and to make a great decision. “How many of you will now dedicate your lives to the Lord? How many of you from this day forth will dedicate yourself to doing the will of God?” Are you going to go on with God because you did that? Are you going to be called to a place where you are to give your life to full-time Christian service—you’re going to go into the ministry? Some churches have services where young people are urged down the aisle to stand before the congregation and say, “I’m going to the seminary. I’m going into the ministry.”

I remember a man visited this church one time, and I sensed that there was something disturbing him, and after a while he said, “You know, I’d like to go home, but I hate to go home.” I asked him why. He said, “Oh, we had a life commitment service back there and they asked some of us to go into the ministry and dedicate our lives to the Lord’s service. I got up and I committed my life, and I spent a year in seminary, and I hate it. God doesn’t want me to be a preacher, and I hate to go back and face the people.”

Now that’s pathetic. That’s exactly the kind of misery that comes when somebody gives you the idea that your spiritual gift is a matter of some dramatic decision. It’s not that at all. It’s a matter of a lot of little individual decisions that you keep making as you move toward the plan of God in your life. That’s why, in this church, we don’t convey to young people the idea that the epitome of the Christian life to be a missionary, or to be a preacher, or to be something in the Lord’s work. If that’s the epitome of God’s life for you, that’s exactly where he will lead you by a series of decisions. It is our business to keep you so informed of the Word of God that He’ll be able to lead you in those decisions. We don’t con young people in the place into making decisions that embarrass them and which they regret and which distort their lives. Can you imagine what can happen to somebody who gets into the ministry who doesn’t belong there? Why, they’ll tear him to shreds. He’ll be a prime candidate for the nut house before the first six months are out. The same goes for being a missionary. I have a suspicion about that a lot of people who go to the mission field. You would be shocked if you know the statistics of how many go to the mission field and come back home. I have a feeling that a lot of those people who are out on the mission field because somebody kicked them into an emotional jag during a life commitment service. They didn’t have enough doctrine in the directive minds to be able to make the decision relative to how God wanted them to exercise their spiritual gifts, and where.

Verse 4 says that there are differences of spiritual gifts among believers. You are given this gift at the point of salvation by the sovereign ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Differences of gifts, but the same Spirit. You are not given this gift because you have a commendable family that you come from, or because you have a commendable background, or because you have some natural talents. This business of natural talents causes some trouble for a lot of Christians. Some people who don’t feel they have very much in the way of natural talents, so they equate that with not having much to offer in the Lord’s service. Nothing could be further from the truth. I don’t care if you’re the biggest dud, or if you sound like you have a mouthful of marbles when you talk, or if you’re an old crow when you sing, or if you can’t say two sentences in a row and remember what you said. That has nothing to do with serving the Lord, because that’s a matter of spiritual abilities. The person who may be the most unimpressive and unimposing personality when it comes to natural gifts, may be a prince in the Kingdom of God when it comes to spiritual gifts. So please don’t undersell yourself. There’s a difference between your natural abilities and your spiritual abilities. And don’t keep trying to serve the Lord on the basis of your natural abilities. And don’t keep trying to carry on in the Lord’s service under factors that you were born with rather than those which He gave you in order to perform that work.

Remember that Paul was the worst of sinners (1 Timothy 1:12-15). Yet the apostle Paul, who was the worst sinner, was given the very highest gift at the time—the highest gift in the New Testament was the gift of apostle, the gift of pure spiritual authority, absolute spiritual dictatorship. We don’t have apostles today, but this was the highest gift, and the apostle Paul, who was the worst of sinners, received the highest gift. It has nothing to do with your background, nothing to do with what you were, and nothing to do with you have done with your life up to this point. You have gifts. Your business is to find out what they are and how to function under them.

**The Holy Spirit**

So we have the same Spirit, referring to God the Holy Spirit, who is the source of all these gifts. Sameness among Christians, relative to the Holy Spirit, has to do with spirituality. What is different among Christians is that He gives them different spiritual gifts.

**Jesus Christ**

In verse 5, we go to another person of the godhead. “And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.” The words “there are” connote a continuous fact, and diversities are the same as used in verse 4. Now here we have another word. This word is “administrations.” The Greek word looks like this: “diakonia.” “Diakonia” means ministry, or a service. The best word is probably service, as performed by a servant. This is the same word that we have in Ephesians 4:12 that explains to us what purposes of the pastor-teacher gift. Ephesians 4:12 says, “For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry.” There you have the same word, “diakonia,” the work of the ministry, the work of service; and, that is the work of the production of divine good through your spiritual gifts in your Christian service. Christians with the same spiritual gift are called to different uses of this gift as they produce divine good. They operate the same gift in different situations.

You may have the gift of teaching. You may have the spiritual ability to explain the Word of God so people understand it, they receive it, and they act upon it. You may use that gift as a youth club leader. You may use that gift of teaching as a Sunday School teacher. You may use it as a Bible class teacher. You may use it by simply standing on the street corner and talking to people who come by and are interested in discussing the Word of God. You may use it when you invite your friends over to talk about the Bible. You may use it with your unsaved neighbors. There are different situations and different services for the same spiritual gift. Not everybody who has the gift of teaching uses it within the same context. That’s the point here. Christians with the same spiritual gift are called to use it in different situations. This does not therefore mean that one technique is the only technique that everybody should use. This is a bad mistake to make with your spiritual gift. Because you see someone with your spiritual gift, and they are using it in a certain technique in a certain situation, with fruitfulness, so you say, “That’s how I should use my gift.” So you try to imitate the situation that person has. People respond to different techniques and to different types of communicators. Therefore, you should use your gift commensurate with your own temperament and personality.

Christians, all of them, are to glorify the Lord with these different approaches, and they do, under the filling of the Spirit (John 16:14). Since every Christian glorifies the Lord in these different services of the same gift, there is no ground for one Christian to view himself and his technique as superior. This is bad when some Christian thinks that he has a technique that is superior to that of the other believers. Who is behind these varied techniques? Verse 5 says there are different services, but “the same Lord,” and this refers to God the Son. Jesus Christ is the administrator of the various expressions of Christian service—the various specialties. So sameness among Christians relative to Jesus Christ has to do with their union with Him, but what is different is their kind of service, under which they exercise their gifts.

Being in union requires all of us to do certain things. We are all called to be witnesses, to pray, to worship, to give, to study the Bible, and so on. All Christians in the church age are in full-time service, but you have different expressions, different services, through which you use your gift.

So point number one this morning has been that God gives every Christian certain spiritual gifts. Secondly, the expression of those gifts will find a variety of services—the same gift used in different ways. Verse 6 says, “And there are diversities of operation.” Again, we have “there are” and “diversities.” This is an absolute condition (“there are”). This is the normal condition during the church age. Here, the differences are called “operations,” and the Greek word is “energema.” This means the effects of your particular gift. The effects which result when you exercise your spiritual gift. The same spiritual gift will produce varying results.

Here’s another thing that Christians need to get some peace about. Suppose that you have the gift of teaching. You exercise it within the context of a specialized service to which the Lord Jesus Christ has directed you to use that gift which the Holy Spirit gave you. However, you see another Christian, maybe in one of your church clubs, who is tremendously fruitful. Or in one of the other operations in some phase of the Lord’s work, many are being reached, truly responding. However, in your operation not so many are responding. What are you going to think? Your old sin nature tells you that you’re not as spiritual. You don’t have as good a gift. You’re not using your gift right. You’re not pleasing the Lord. Don’t you believe it. God says that the Father decides how much fruit is going to come from your gift, and it will not be the same for every Christian.

In Mark 4:20, we read, “And these are they that are sown on good ground.” This is the story of the sower and the seed. “Such as hear the word and receive it and bring forth fruit—some 30-fold, some 60-fold, and some 100-fold.” Now if these people brought forth any fruit at all as a result of sowing the Word of God, they had to be spiritual Christians, for one thing, and they had to have the gift to sow it. And for any fruit to come from it, they had to be spiritual and they had to sow it, but who determines how much fruit would come from it? God, the Father determines it, and some fruit was 30-fold, some was 60-fold, and some was 100-fold (thoroughly and properly sown, but with different results).

So don’t fall into the statistical trap to determine by statistics whether God is using and blessing your service. Notice that it says again, “the same God who works all in all.” The word “works” means the active operational power in something. This is the active force which is constantly determining the results of spiritual gifts. The grammar here is present, which means God’s continual work, and the active voice indicates that God is the one who is making these decisions. And, “all in all” here means something in someone. After this word for “work,” the word “all in all” is stressing the results. We have the word “work.” Then the grammar has the word “all,” in the accusative case. In the Greek grammar, that means results. So what he is saying here is that the Father takes the various effects and determines what is going to come (the level of fruitfulness) to every many for every gift that he exercises. Sameness among Christians, relative to the Father, has to do with belonging to His family. They all belong to His family. However, differences among Christians result in the Father’s bringing different levels of fruit from each believer’s service. All of the spiritual fruit is the result of the Father’s work in each believer’s service. He decides what returns are going to come from your service—not your devotion, not your gimmicks, and not your devices. This is one of the problems of Christian education. There is sometimes the impression given that you can increase fruitfulness by techniques that you use. That’s not true.

So in all three of these sentences we have an interesting emphasis. At the beginning of the sentence is the word “diversities.” In the Greek sentence, the most important thought is placed first. The emphasis is that while we Christians have the sameness and a common heritage in one way or another to the three members of the Trinity, we have differences. You must recognize, when you deal in Christian service, that there are differences among us. At the end of each of these sentences comes the word “same.” The Greek does not have to put things in a certain word order. So God the Holy Spirit says that the first thing He wants to emphasize is that there are certain differences among Christians when it comes to serving the Lord. Then He says that the second thing the He wants to emphasize is that there is a sameness. Christians have a common heritage, but they serve the Lord in a different way.

Now let’s look at the spiritual benefit to believers in verse 7. “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit.” The word “manifestation is “phanerosis,” and it means something that is revealed or disclosed. Here is refers to the spiritual gifts. It is the same thing as what we found with “charisma” in verse 4—the spiritual gifts that the Spirit gives. So the spiritual gifts of the Spirit are given to every man to profit. The “gifts of the Holy Spirit are given” means it is supplied to the believers in the church age, it’s present tense, and it is in the passive voice which means that God the Holy Spirit gives them and you don’t decide what gift you want.

Please don’t make the mistake by saying, “Now how would I like to serve the Lord? Well, I would like the gift of flower arranger” (if there were a gift like that). Or, “I would like the gift of door smiler, to greet the visitors” (if there were a gift like that). Some of you are good at smiling and some of you are terrible at it. But if there were a gift like that, you could become an effective door smiler or flower arranger for the church flowers, just because you decided that’s what you wanted. It is given. “And to every man” means to every individual believer. Incidentally, here in this verse, this is what comes first in the Greek sentence, “to every man.” This emphasizes that there isn’t a Christian in this room this morning who does not have capacity and ability for spiritual service. Some of you have one gift, and some of you may have ten gifts. And I’ll tell you that if you’re a ten-gifted Christian, you’re in trouble. You better get with it. A lot more is going to be expected of you than of the person that the providence has decided that you’re a one-gift Christian. You’re responsible for every one of them. These are given, we’re told, to each believer, to profit. The Greek word is “sunpatro,” and it means to bring things together here for the benefit of all the believers in the local assembly. The Holy Spirit’s gifts are joined to the individual believer for the benefit of the body. And, the active voice here indicates that this is the continual benefit which results when a spirit-filled Christian exercises his spiritual gift.

**The Goals of Spiritual Gifts**

Now, here are the goals of the spiritual gifts: First there is edification of the believers—building up of Christians. The goal of the spiritual gifts is not to build yourself up. The Bible never indicates that. The Bible indicates that you have spiritual gifts to build up the believers. The point is to bring us to spiritual maturity.

In summing this up, please look in Ephesians 4:11. Certain spiritual gifts are listed which we will look at later. Verse 12 tells us that these gifts, particularly the pastor-teacher gift and the gift of evangelism, both of which exist today, are for the perfecting (the equipping) of the saints for service in order that they may do the work of the ministry (to produce divine good) for the edifying (the building up of the body of Christ), meaning to build Christians into spiritual maturity. You know that unless a pastor-teacher gets up service after service and performs the first part of verse 12, the second and third part of verse 12 will never be realized. If you sit in a church where you listen to some preacher with a mellifluous voice who spouts Scripture and gives you inspirational talk, you will rob yourself of eternal rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Unless you are being fed doctrine on a substantial regular basis, you will not be able to do the work of the ministry, which is producing divine good, and you will not be able to build up either yourself or anybody else into spiritual maturity.

**Spiritual Immaturity**

There are certain signs characteristic of spiritual immaturity:

1) This is what we’re trying to get away from with the use of our spiritual gifts. What characterizes children? One thing is instability. Nothing holds a child’s attention very long. He is forever seeking new attractions. A Christian who is spiritually immature is flitting from one service to another. He gets into some Christian server, gets his nose out of joint, and then shoves off. He finds himself something else to play with. He’s a faddist. This year he wants to do this, and next year he’s got the fad to do something else. And the worst of all is when I see Christians when they come to the year when the fad is to cut out, and to resign from doing anything, and to destroy all effectiveness of their spiritual gifts. Has it ever occurred to you that God hasn’t told you that He’s given you a certain spiritual gift for a certain number of years? Do you know how long you have a spiritual gift? You have that spiritual gift until the time they pull that sheet up over your face. And do you know how long you’re supposed to exercise that gift? You should exercise it until the very end. If you have a gift and you’re retiring from it, you had better think that over again, because God has not invited you to cut out. But immature Christians, or Christians who know better but who start acting like children, are unstable, and they flip.

2) Secondly, they are easily deceived. These are the Christians who are subject to the cults and to the rationalizations of other Christians. They can be conned by what another Christian comes along and says. Here’s somebody who has finally gotten on the ball and they’re being a very wonderful Christian now, and the only reason they’re being a wonderful Christian is because nobody is bothering them in their carnality and facing them up to what they are with the Word of God. Christians who are immature are patsies, easily deceived. When you become mature, you will not be deceived. This is important if you’re going to exercise your spiritual gift: More people will get you to exercise your spiritual gift in hopeless rat hole operations than you can imagine, and it will be because you are easily deceived.

3) Thirdly, children lack a sense of proportions. They will have a dispute over trivial things, but they will neglect vital matters. Many Christians will pour themselves into worthless projects—human good operations that people applaud but that are worthless to God, because they lack a sense of proportions. If you have children at home, you know how they’ll argue about the most trivial matter and leave important things undone.

4) Children speak in selfish terms. They’re preoccupied with themselves. Christians who are carnal are preoccupied with self instead of being preoccupied with Christ.

5) They’re opinionated. They’re all-knowing. Here comes somebody who has been in some spiritual situation for years and years, and they really haven’t learned anything. They haven’t really progressed spiritually. They can’t really say what they have done for God. For all the money they’ve invested and the effort they’ve put in, they know that there’s a reward waiting for them in heaven. But all of a sudden they begin to realize that they’re not really doctrinally oriented to know how to use their money and the time so that they are sure they are getting divine good return. Now that’s traumatic for a Christian to spend years and then begin to suspect that. So you take a Christian like that and begin leading them into some spiritual enlightenment, and they begin to get into phase into God’s plan for them, and then they become opinionated. When you’re a child and you don’t know much, you have strong opinions about everything, and you’re all-knowing in spite of your short-term entrance into some insight.

6) Children gravitate toward carnal companions. Your friends are very revealing about what you are. According to what you esteem, you will gravitate toward people who esteem the same thing. Your friends will reveal worlds about you. Children gravitate toward bad companions.

7) They lack respect for age and constituted authority. We have a lot of that childish talk on college campuses, “Don’t trust anybody over 30.” Now some of the leaders are having to raise that to, “Don’t trust anybody over 35,” because they’ve gone over 30.

8) Children are alert to pleasure and dead to duty. They’re eager for fun, but carrying out the garbage and practicing the piano, oh my no. But we have Christians that really want fun—the beauty and the thrill and excitement of serving the Lord. I could ask you, “Come and be a leader in summer camp, out on the magnificent Lake Murray, under the stars, out there on the lake, skiing, riding horses, eating lobster, and all that stuff.” This is sometimes done in order to get you to think that it’s really glamorous going to summer camp, sitting with those bugs, human and other kind. But this is a Christian education technique again. Christian education specializes in the Tom Sawyer method of getting Christians to think it’s fun so they’ll get on and serve the Lord. A lot of churches are getting their fences whitewashed because they’re pulling Tom Sawyer tricks on the believers. And the believers think it’s really great fun to be doing it. But you don’t exercise your spiritual gifts under those conditions. God’s motivation is doctrine, and that’s all that carries your gift to fruitfulness.

**Motivation for Christian Service Through Spiritual Gifts**

What’s the ultimate motivation for Christian service through your spiritual gifts? We have it in 1 Peter 4:11, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister, let him do it as the ability which God gives, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ for whom be praised and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” That’s the ultimate goal of spiritual gifts—spiritual maturity that expresses itself in the glory of God.

John E. Danish, 1971