

The Local Church 2 - Part 5

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the role of all believers in ministry and the importance of exercising spiritual gifts within the local church.

Duration: 7:08

Scripture: Psalm 139:13

Topics: "Body Of Christ", "Gifts For Ministry"

Description

This sermon delves into Psalm 139, exploring the profound beauty of David's reflection on the formation of life in the womb, highlighting the intricate work of God in creating each individual. It also discusses the significance of Christ's descent into Mary's womb and subsequent ascension, emphasizing the special service gifts given to believers for ministry. The message challenges the traditional view of ministry, asserting that all believers are called to serve and minister in the body of Christ.

Transcript

The Earth. That is a difficult thing. But if you'll turn to Psalm 139, I think you get a little light on this subject.

Psalm 139 is one of the other passages in the scripture that uses that expression, the lower parts of the earth. In Psalm 139, David is speaking about his birth, his conception, and his formation in his mother's womb. Psalm 139 is really one of the most beautiful psalms, I think, in the entire book, and they're all beautiful.

Psalm 139. So I say, here you have the formation of the fetus in the mother's womb. Now he says in verse 14, I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well.

My frame, that is my skeletal structure, was not hidden from you when I was made in secret, that's in the womb, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Well, now, what does that mean? Well, it means the womb. Where was the formation of his body took place? It's a poetic expression.

It really helps sometimes in reading scripture to have the soul of a poet. Now I would never have put that together. I would never have put the lowest parts of the earth together with Mary's womb, but that's what it means.

That's what it means in this passage of scripture, the lowest parts of the earth. So it says here, when Christ ascended, what does it mean to be also first descended into Mary's womb there, and was born in Bethlehem? He who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And then he turned around and gave these gifts to men, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers.

I'd just like to say, I don't think it means that every one of us here today has one of those gifts. I believe these are special service gifts, to be somewhat distinguished from the lists in Romans chapter 12 and 1 Corinthians chapter 12. These are special service gifts.

First of all, apostles and prophets. Apostles were men who witnessed Christ in resurrection and whom he sent forth. The apostles in the primary sense of the New Testament are not with us today.

We don't have apostles in that sense today. The prophets were men of God in the New Testament period who gave us the word of God, gave us the New Testament. The apostles and prophets gave us what we have today in the pages of the New Testament.

In the primary sense of the word, we don't need apostles and prophets today because we have their ministry right here. Now in a weaker sense of the word, we may have apostles and prophets. We may have men that go out and God blesses their work in a marvelous way.

I mentioned some last night that I would think of an apostolic ministry, but not really apostles. Not with the power and authority of apostles. We have men today, prophets, not men who give the word of God.

We wouldn't accept anybody who professed to give us the word of God, but men who expound the word of God, who explain the word of God. Prophets in a weaker sense today. But the other gifts we certainly have today, evangelists.

Evangelist is a man who goes forth with the gospel. The parish is the world, not the church. The parish of the evangelist is the world, going into all the world, and he goes where the fish are running.

Pastors, I believe in this sense, were itinerant pastors. That is in its plural, you remember. I think in that sense that Timothy was a pastor.

He went and ministered among the churches. Titus was a pastor. Certainly Paul had the heart of a pastor.

And teachers, men, again, who expound the word of God. Now verse 12 is a crucial verse. Why did he give these gifts? For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry.

In the King James Version of the Bible, this is a little confusing. It says, for the edification of the saints, comma, for the work of the ministry, comma, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Sounds like three different purposes.

No, no, no, no. It misses the whole point. For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry.

Look carefully at the verse, and to whom is committed the work of ministry. Anybody? The saints. The saints.

This is revolutionary, friends. Not to a select group of clergymen, but to the saints. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the work of ministry is committed to you.

You see, the problem is with that word ministry. Whenever you find, for instance, a young man today, and he has a special love for the word of God, and he spends his time studying the word of God, and he's growing in the things of God, people say, well, he should go to seminary and study for the ministry. It's completely wrong, that type of thinking.

If he's serving the Lord, he's already in the ministry. So are you, men and women. Saved by the grace of God, you're in the ministry.

This is revolutionary. It really does away with so much of what has come down through the years in the church of Christ. For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

You see, the church, let's say, is young. And how is it going to grow? Well, think of that baby in the crib. The baby is in the crib, and its legs are jumping all around, and it's flailing its arms, and it's yelling, exercising his lungs.

And that, you say, what a waste of energy. No, that's part of the growth process. If he didn't use his arms, they would atrophy by his side, he wouldn't be able to use his arms.

And that's the way it is with the church. Unless the gifts are exercised in the church, they become atrophied, too. And we have a lot of that, I'm sorry to say, in the church today.

And it goes on to explain that, till we all come to the unity of the faith.

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