

THE GIFT OF TEACHING

Romans 12:7

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Romans 12:7, and also if you'll turn to Acts 18:24, we'll tie two portions of God's Word together today. In order to understand the context of Romans 12:7, I'd better back up and read also the sixth verse of Romans 12: "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve... (Romans 12:6-7, NIV). And today, that last phrase from verse 7: "...if it is teaching, let him teach."

Then, coupled with the demonstration of that principle, Acts 18:24–28 (NIV): "Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."

How grateful, our heavenly Father, for these moments which we have had today already to sing a hallelujah to Your name. To say with our hearts, and to express with our lips, that which is upon us deeply: "Jesus is Lord." To the glory of God the Father, who has loved us with an everlasting love, and through the power of His Spirit, who has brought us into the kingdom of God, which does not perish or pass away. We're thankful, our Father, for the living nature of Your Word, which comes to us once more today and speaks to us with power and strength. So we

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ask that as this Word is proclaimed, it would find its lodging place in our heart. According to the level of our need, may it minister. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

We've now been for some weeks in this section of Romans which begins with verse 6, developing the theme which Paul is tracing on the motivational gifts that are present within the church Body. Gifts which we use to motivate one another to serve the Lord, to build up the Body. As we come today to the gift of teaching, I just want to spend a moment reviewing where we have been in the gifts.

We have been attempting to say that the Scripture is indicating that you, individually, have some gift to offer this church Body, some gift to offer the body of Christ. You have charisma, a gift which God has bestowed upon you. Paul says in Romans 12:3 that "everyone among you ought not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him."

Peter says in 1 Peter 4:10: "As each has received a gift, employ it for one another." So we have been looking at this list with recognition that these gifts are present among us.

There is a sense in which all of us do certain functions. All of us are called to prophesy. All of us are called to serve. We have tried to develop how—within the church Body, when it meets—there are the prophets, and the ministry of prophecy comes forth. But yet all of us, at moments when the word of God needs to be spoken in a particular situation, can lean upon and be dependent upon the Spirit to speak to us in the moment. So while there is a specialized function for the gifts, there's a certain sense in which there is a generalized distribution of these things which are available to us all.

Just as, for example, all of us sing. At least I hope you do. When we gather together in congregation, we sing. We don't worry about how flat we are in our voice or how off-key we are. At least I hope you don't. I hope you all enter in to sing. But your singing may not

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necessarily be the kind of singing that edifies the whole Body. There are some within us that have that ministry to one another.

I think that same thing applies to prophecy and serving. While all of us may prophesy or all of us may serve, there are some who are especially called to these roles in noted, distinctive ways. So Paul is saying to us in this passage that while each of us have the gift, we are to expect diversity in expression of the gift. Some who serve, for example, panic at the thought of getting up and speaking to a group. They're not necessarily active participants even in a Bible study because they're kind of like Martha. They enjoy serving rather than sitting in a teaching situation.

A server, on the other hand, may not be a good leader or facilitator. The gift of giving aid, as Paul cites later in Romans 12:8, is really the gift of leadership—being an administrator, a facilitator. Martha didn't make a very good leader or administrator because she had a problem in motivating other people to work. She came to Jesus and said, "Make Mary help me!" (Luke 10). A good leader doesn't have to use that kind of technique to get somebody to do a job. They're far more subtle than that, hopefully.

So there is diversity within the gifts. We're not to feel left out if we don't have Peter's shadow ministry of his shadow falling on the sick. Maybe our gift is making clothes for the poor, something like this.

We also recognize that the gifts are of divine origin and are sovereignly bestowed by God. Paul says in verse 3 of Romans 12 that it is according to the measure of faith which God has assigned to us. First Corinthians 12:11 also speaks about the gifts of the Spirit being sovereignly placed in the church family.

How do we, therefore, begin to recognize the gifts if God gives them sovereignly? I would say that, as I look at the example of Scripture, I'd recognize that spiritual gifts are not given to us

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from a personality vacuum. Generally, spiritual enablement is added to a natural endowment or ability.

A key example of this is in Exodus 31, where they were making the tent or the tabernacle in the wilderness. There were some people who were skillful in the crafts by the name of Bezalel and Oholiab. Moses, in writing Exodus 31, writes that the Lord says: “I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge in all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze.” Filled with the Spirit of God.

Certainly Bezalel and Oholiab developed that trait themselves, but now they’re going to employ it for use in the Old Testament body of Christ. The Lord is saying, “Beyond your natural abilities, I want to endow you with the special ability to use those things which are native to your own personal unity and experience, and I’m going to equip you to function as you’ve never functioned before.”

This is certainly the case in the New Testament with Saul. What was he before he became a Christian? He was a rabbi. He was trained in understanding and speaking. He was skilled with words. And the Spirit of God came upon him and gave him a gift—sovereignly bestowed by the Spirit, but in keeping generally with that which was true to his own personality.

I got to thinking about this, how the Lord put certain gifts in my life because of “circumstances.” For the Christian, there may not be such a thing as circumstances; more of providence. But I got to thinking, “Why am I today in the pastorate? Why did God call me to essentially be a teacher to the body of Christ?” I got to thinking back to my childhood. There are many reasons that immediately become apparent why I’m not doing something more athletic. Why did I become interested in books? Because, as a kid, I was nearsighted and I could read. And I was afraid to play baseball or other contact sports because my glasses would get broken, and it was an expense to replace them. So it was easier to curl up in the corner and read a book, be a bookworm. Then

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my mother taught me that a good Christian boy doesn't fight with other boys. I took her at her word. So I avoided those kinds of situations where I'd get in fisticuffs. Besides all that, I'm terribly, physically uncoordinated. The Lord took some natural things in my life and, hopefully to that, put an enablement beyond that.

I've struggled this week recognizing that the message today was on the gift of teaching. I told Jewel on Thursday, "I really don't have a sense of direction. I'm not sure I'm qualified to speak on it in a way that will even be interesting." But there is a sense, certainly from the Scripture, in which all of us are teachers, just like all of us can be servants.

According to Deuteronomy, we're to teach the things of God to our children, to talk of them when we're sitting in our house, when we're walking by the way, when we lie down, when we rise up.

Paul, in writing to the Colossians, talks in Colossians 3:16 about the teaching ministry of every believer to one another. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom..." and the like. As you teach one another.

Yet there is that special role of teaching ministry where God sets forth certain persons within the Body to, in a sense, function in a specialized capacity. What, therefore, are the qualities or elements involved in this gift of teaching? I believe that a beautiful example in Scripture is provided for us in that of Apollos in Acts 18. For he certainly exemplifies what is involved in the teaching process—what is meant to edify, or build up, the body of Christ.

Let me look with you at several qualities that are in his life which mark him as having the gift of teaching. I'll try, in looking at this, to apply things to all of our lives. So if you don't feel like you have the gift of teaching, you can nevertheless be blessed through even this consideration today.

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I. First thing that strikes us about Apollos, in terms of recognizing that the gift of teaching was present in him, is that he is described as an eloquent man.

Eloquent. When he spoke, persons listened. That, to me, is an idea associated with the concept of eloquence. We don't need to think of eloquence as necessarily containing the idea of a spell-binding orator. The word which is used here in Acts 18:24 is used only once in the New Testament, and in uses outside the New Testament it's basically used to describe two different kinds of people. Sometimes both qualities are found in one person.

It is a word used to describe a person who is learned. One who has thought much and has much to say. It's also used to describe a person who can say it well. There are some persons who have not thought much and have not much to say, but when they speak, they say it well. TV actors are a classic example of this. Then there are those who have thought a lot and have much to say, but can't say it very well at all. I had a professor in seminary who was a genius. He knows, I don't know how many languages. He's a translator and a scholar par excellence. But his lectures absolutely drove you to distraction. You had to grip yourself to want to stay in the chair.

Apollos had that ability which merged both of these talents of an understanding of what God's Word was, as well as an ability to say it in such a way that persons listened. He was both an informed person and an interesting person. He had something to say. And when he said it, persons paid attention.

A sign—since the teaching gift involves an understanding that people are listening to the teaching—a very clear indication that should be made in determining whether or not you have this gift is: If people have the habit of falling asleep on you, or yawning, or becoming bored when you are teaching, it may be a sign that you should attend to some other duty. This really scares me. You can help someone develop the gift of eloquence by being alert even when you're not.

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Apollos exemplifies Jesus in respect to eloquence. It is said of the Lord no one ever spoke like this man. The certain power of words that God has supernaturally placed as a gift in His Body among teachers communicates in this kind of a way that excites rapt attention.

II. The second quality of the gift of teaching which Apollos demonstrates is that he is mighty in the Scripture.

The word in the revised is “well-versed.” The root involved carries the idea of being mighty or strong or powerful—or thoroughly-instructed—in the Scripture. The only way to become mighty in Scripture, or well-versed or powerful in Scripture, is to study the Scripture. You cannot become powerful in that which you have not used or do not know. So at the back of Apollos’ experience, we see two dimensions. On the one hand, he is mighty in the Scripture. On the other hand, he was instructed in the way of the Lord. That instruction had a certain deficiency to it, as we will see shortly. But what information was available to him, the written Old Testament Scriptures, and what knowledge he had of Jesus, he had absorbed himself in learning so that he was able to use it so well he could be described as being mighty in the Scripture.

A parallel to this is the development of the Apostle Paul. I may be reading something into the text of Acts on this, but I don’t think I am. After his conversion in Acts 9, it is described of him that immediately in the synagogue he proclaimed Jesus, saying, “He is the Son of God.” Notice, he simply proclaimed, or announced, or testified, “Jesus is the Son of God.” Then, in Galatians 1, Paul says that after that initial conversion time when he was in Damascus, he went off into the Arabian wilderness and he spent—we can add the chronology together—approximately two or three years. Then we come back to the text of Acts, and we find that he is all of a sudden proclaiming in the synagogue, and he’s doing this kind of a thing. Saul increased all the more in strength. He increased in strength because he spent several years in the desert studying and really recycling his whole past experience. Now, with the present experience of Jesus and merging this

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into his life, he had increased all the more in strength and confounded the Jews that lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

What had happened? After his conversion, he simply proclaimed. But by the time he's through the study process, his grasp of the Scripture and its relationship to Jesus is so powerful that it can be described as proving, from the Scripture, Jesus as the Messiah.

Clarence McCartney had a great expression of what happened to Saul in those years of study in the wilderness. He said, "He went into the wilderness to spend those years in exile and study, carrying in his knapsack the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets. And he came back carrying in his heart, and now on his lips, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians."

There is that quality of being mighty in Scripture which caused Scripture to be lifted off the page, making it more than a Book of authority in the past. But making it, through the power of the Spirit, a living instrument in our lives here and now.

Phillip shows this quality admirably when he's told to go to the desert and there, coming along, is an Ethiopian eunuch in his chariot. And he's reading the Scripture, and he doesn't understand it, which is where the gift of teaching comes in. It's a gift where one, on his own, may not necessarily understand the Scripture. Phillip says to the eunuch, "Do you understand what you're reading?" And he says, "No, I don't. Would you come up here and explain it to me?" That is what is involved in being mighty in Scripture.

One of the reasons why we attempt in this church to preach expositively—that is, through the Scripture, through books of Scripture—is that I recognize that, ultimately, if you stay in this congregation and do not move around a whole lot, the whole totality of the Word of God will come to you, and it will become living and powerful in your experience as you sit under and grasp the Scripture, as it unfolds of God.

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There's two ways of preaching sermons. One is to come up with an idea and then to find a text for it. The other is to let the text of the Scripture control what you're saying. When that happens, you have to preach on some subjects that you normally wouldn't choose.

I recall an example from some years ago. I preached through Leviticus a number of years ago. I stated at the beginning that we were going to find out whether Scripture was inspired or not—if it inspired us as we went through it. A lot of New Year's resolutions on reading the Scriptures, through, break down in the middle of Leviticus. I was, quite frankly, scared to begin preaching through Leviticus because I knew when you hit the middle of the book, there were some sections in there that you really don't see how they relate at all to life now. Especially Leviticus 16, which dealt with something called "bodily discharges." I thought, "How, on a Sunday morning, can that Word speak to us?" But the Lord was pushing me into Leviticus. "Get in there. I'll show you at the right time what it means, what it has to say. Without trying to allegorize or mystify the text or anything, it will come as it should." As I struggled with this, finally, sure enough, that Leviticus 16 came around and I said, "Lord, what do You want from this?" All of a sudden, the Lord spoke to me and said, "Here's your sermon title: 'A Very Personal God.'" If you think God is remote and doesn't know what's going on, let me tell you, Leviticus 16 says he's got it so down, He knows your bodily functions. He's very personal.

It seems to me that when we come to the Scripture, we're always looking at the Scripture from the standpoint of not what did it mean in the past, but what does it mean right now in our experience? The Scripture gives us the authority to proclaim the Lord. Jesus has said, "The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6).

The gift of teaching should seek to do what Jesus himself did for the disciples when, after His resurrection, He opened their hearts to understand the Scriptures. And He explained to them in all the Scripture the things concerning himself. So mighty in Scripture is a quality that is present

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in the gift of teaching. It does not come full blown. It's developed over the process of time.

Apollos is a clear example of it.

Matthew Henry says of Apollos being mighty in Scripture: "He was not only ready in the Scriptures, able to quote text offhand and repeat them and tell you where to find them, but he understood the sense and the meaning of the Scripture. He knew how to make use and apply the text, how to reason out of the Scriptures and to reason strongly. A convincing, commanding, confirming power went along with his expositions and his applications of the Scripture."

III. A third quality of the gift of teaching present in Apollos was that he was "fervent in the spirit" (Acts 18:25, KJV).

There are two possibilities: He was fervent in his spirit, or he was fervent in the Spirit. And possibly both should be understood. The word for "fervent" means literally "to boil" or "to ferment." To seethe or to bubble. It can be used of leaven rising. So it describes, figuratively, an arousal and emotional and mental state. Fervent in spirit. In fact, Paul tells us in Romans 12, "Be aglow in the Spirit." It's the same thing. Be fervent in your spirit.

What's an analogy to this? It dawned on me that just a few weeks ago in Rams football we had a classic example of what fervency in spirit does. Minnesota and the Rams were fervent in spirit. The team that was going to mop them up they just zonked! But they go down to New Orleans, and on the statistics the Rams still looked the same as they would have looked against Minnesota. But something happened in the course of a week—what fervency of spirit can do, if you don't have it, when you get upset by a third-rate team. Fervent in spirit.

This is applied to Apollos. The gift of teaching means that where there is teaching in the Body, the teacher fails if the teacher understands his or her mission is simply putting in an appearance, or giving a lecture, or giving a teaching, or receiving a check, or going through the motions. It is the fervency of the Spirit which communicates what God wants to the heart of people in that

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moment. It is, to me, an incredible phenomenon, how the Spirit of God can take words that are being said, which are singular in scope, and sometimes, like today, very limited in application. Yet take that Word and translate it into the experience of all of those present, so that each of us can grab hold and take and be sustained in our soul. Fervency in spirit is being equipped with the Spirit of God, being animated in the life as the teacher puts this in focus.

There is a danger to being fervent in spirit without being mighty in Scripture. Because that leads to radicalism and fanaticism and a lot of haranguing. But what a coupling in Apollos to see these qualities put together.

IV. Another quality in Apollos in his teaching was that he was accurate.

Luke says, “He spoke and taught accurately things concerning Jesus” (Acts 18:25). Then Luke goes on to note that he didn’t know all about Jesus so he needed to learn more, and Aquilla and Priscilla instructed him so he could teach more accurately. The idea within accuracy is that the teacher wants to validate, document, authenticate truth. A person with the gift of a teaching ministry, while they’re listening to others has that sense of wanting to say, “On what authority are you saying that?” And, “Is that really true what is being said?”

I know this last week I came across a book which was written by a particular author on the gift of teaching. He was doing a development at the beginning on the gifts of the Spirit in operation in the Church today. He said, “The first thing you must understand about the gifts is that in the New Testament there are two kinds of gifts, permanent gifts and temporary gifts. Permanent gifts are teaching and administrating and pastoring and wisdom and knowledge. Temporary gifts are tongues and healings and miracles.” I looked at that and said, “Wait a minute! Who told you that? You just got that as a line from a particular seminary that puts out that line.”

The gift of teaching is one that seeks to teach accurately, so that one picks this up in the quality of Luke. He uses the same word that is used of Apollos, that he was accurate. Luke writes, “It

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seemed good to me also, having followed all things accurately for some time past, to write an orderly account for you.” In other words, accuracy leads to an orderly presentation. Teachers tend to be organized and systematic as part of the gift which has been given.

This flagging things which may not be right is a thing which is part and parcel of being a teacher. I hear phrases from time to time that are used in Christian community, especially since there are a number of views in charismatic renewal in regards to being sick and the like. All are interesting facets which come into play in the matter of healing. But it's getting them all together that count. Teaching, by its very nature, is integrative. It takes isolated statements and isolated theologies and it tries to put them and bring them into the framework of the totality of what God is saying on a particular subject.

There are many who come along who would set the Scripture against itself. Jesus is very clear. The Scripture cannot be broken. You cannot set this part of Scripture against that part of Scripture, and claim this part, and ignore teaching which maybe gives another dimension to an overall subject. A two-sidedness instead of a one-sidedness. Scripture is like this many times. Instead of just being one-sided, it is two-sided. It talks, on the one hand, about faith. But on the other hand, it talks about perseverance. It talks about claiming things, but it also talks about, “Thy will be done.” The temptation sometimes is to land on one side rather than on the total aspect of what the Scripture may be saying.

Paul, writing to Timothy, says, “The time is coming when the people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own liking and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths.” This comes when there is a one-sided dimension to the Scripture. Having itching ears, accumulating teachers that will satisfy our own liking.

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So certainly in Apollos' experience, he had this quality of being accurate, which carries with it the connotation of being systematic.

V. Another quality of the gift of teaching that is present in Apollos is that he was teachable.

When Aquilla and Priscilla took him aside privately, they taught him more accurately concerning Jesus, and he received that well. The person, someone has said, who is self-taught, who claims to be self-taught, had a fool for his teacher. And teachers inevitably carry along with that the quest for learning.

Part of the teaching ministry is that it carries with it the temptation toward authoritarianism.

Teachers do have authority from God. But that can so easily slide over to an authoritarianism which says, "Under no circumstances can any one else's view on this subject be right. I alone am right on this subject. The Scripture says to us, "No Scripture is a matter of private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20). It's not for one person to simply declare, "This is the final and last meaning for this."

There's a certain kind of responsibility the Body has to the teaching ministry to check and to balance. But knowledge puffs up, and a person who is not teachable in a teaching role can be so very easily misguided and egocentric. The moment the teacher stops learning is the moment that teacher's ministry is dead.

I've seen people in the teaching ministry get into this very kind of a box. All that is going to be learned has been learned. It's in the safe. It's in the files. You pull it out and you reuse it. You've stopped learning. You've stopped reading. You've stopped studying. You've stopped praying. You've stopped seeing new things. You've forgotten the Word of Jesus, that every scribe who is trained for the kingdom of God is like the householder who takes out of his treasure something that is old and something that is new.

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It's that constant integration that's going on. Apollos is that kind of a person. He's a learner. And that helps him in exercising the teaching ministry. It is a fulfillment of what Jesus said, "To him who has, more will be given."

VI. The final characteristic of Apollos as a teacher is that he was effective.

It says that when he came over to Achaia—when he arrived—he greatly helped those who, through grace, had believed. For he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing them by the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. He was effective in two areas. He edified the saints, and he mortified the unbelievers.

A. He edified the saints. He greatly helped. I still am mulling over a statement said to me in Yugoslavia. "As I look across the Pentecostal church here in Yugoslavia, I am the only person my age in the ministry. All the others whom I grew up with have gone away from the Lord." He went on to describe how the church in Yugoslavia, because persons had not had a background in teaching, when the kids were affected by the Marxist school system, there was not a defense that was given from the pulpit—a logical, rational defense. Many of the kids became infiltrated with the ideas of the age and fell away. Now, that whole terrible situation has been changed because God, in His grace, raised up a teaching ministry which will eventually make strong the church in that area. We know it can happen when that gift is absent from a church. It is a gift which, when absent, can easily leave a way to an attrition of the young who need a defense for the faith which is in them.

There's a striking thing which happens also in Acts 11 when Barnabas goes to the church at Antioch, this new church where all kinds of Gentiles were being brought to the Lord. It says that when Barnabas arrived at the church, he "exhorted" (verse 23, KJV). To "exhort" means to encourage. But as Barnabas looked at that situation, he recognized that if that church was going to continue, it needed an augmentation to his ministry of exhortation. It needed a teacher. So he

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traveled three hundred miles, by ancient means of travel, to get Saul of Tarsus, the rabbi. And he found him and brought him back to Antioch. Then the text of Acts says, “And they taught a large company of disciples” (Acts 11:26). They taught. The first time the word “taught” is used is when Paul arrives on the scene. And his ministry was necessary to sustain this church.

B. So the teaching ministry is meant to build up the Body. But it also, in Apollos’s case, mortified the unbeliever. Because he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Messiah was Jesus—a recognition from the teaching ministry that, as Christians, the arguments are on our side. The realities are with us, and not with the world. We confess and believe Jesus is the Christ.

This past week I was invited to give the opening prayer at the Board of Supervisors meeting. I always struggle with these kinds of public prayers because you’re not supposed to really come out evangelical or mention the Lord’s Name. You’re supposed to pray, but not be political.

That’s kind of hard, sometimes, to do. You don’t want to preach to people. You honestly want to pray to God as a person who’s called upon to pray in public. You don’t want to use it as a vehicle to give a lecture to somebody. That’s not praying. That’s preaching or teaching. So I was struggling. “Lord, how do I pray before this group?” The Lord put within my mind to go to the Supervisors meeting and pray through the Lord’s prayer, giving just moments of interpretation as to what it meant. And really declare His name publicly. It was such a thrill to begin a prayer by saying, “Our Father, we thank You that You are in heaven, that You are not a figment of our imagination, but that You are real and that Your reality has been supremely attested to us by the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead.”

That’s what, “Our Father in heaven,” really is all about. It’s guaranteed because of the resurrection of Jesus. There is to be, within the gift of teaching, that acknowledgement that the

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teacher recognizes the most powerful truth in all of the world: Jesus is risen. It makes it possible for us to face every circumstance in life.

I really should have taken this message today from the teaching ministry of Jesus because He, after all, is the supreme Teacher—the Master Teacher, from whom the qualities that Apollos has are simply derived. But as we come to communion, just a word, a teaching moment. Jesus was often addressed as Teacher. Even His enemies admitted that He was a teacher. And the world today admits that He was a teacher, without confessing that He is Lord and Savior.

As we prepare now to come to this table, what is Jesus teaching us in this moment? I think, very simply, He's teaching us the depth of our need for Him. We cannot ever have relationship with God, we cannot have eternal life, except He came. That's what this table is all about. We needed Him, and He came. This table teaches us, Jesus is teaching us, that God is love. Think of the great love that He has given to you through dying for you. And this teaching also of the table reminds us of the great power of the Lord. Because we continue taking this bread and this cup only until that day when we drink it new with Him in our Father's kingdom.

This is a place where needs are met. This is a place where love is demonstrated. And this is a place that knows the greatest power in all the world—the power of the Spirit, which has brought our Lord Jesus Christ from the grave.

Closing Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for Your presence with us now in these moments as we break bread and share the cup together. You struggled in taking this cup, Lord. You struggled as never a mortal being has struggled. And yet, in the end You cried out, "Nevertheless, not what I will but Thy will be done." And You tasted our sorrows and our sins. All of these were placed on You. You were despised and rejected. You did it all for each of us in this room. You are aware of us with an infinite love. You know even the number of hairs on our head. You have a knowledge of our

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name. There has never been a moment when our existence has not been present in You. You are the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. We are the ones who are called before the foundation of the world to be holy in Christ Jesus.

We praise You for this moment. We pray, as we face the struggles of life which are ours, that through Your example and through this table of fellowship we'll again receive a measure of grace to continue to run the race and win the fight and gain the prize that is laid up for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. We ask this in Your Name. Amen.