

1 Corinthians 12

Good evening and thank you so much for joining us. Would you please turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 12, and tonight we'll be studying another controversial area of the Bible, the gifts of the HS.

SHOW PIC If you've ever seen or listened to an orchestra, you know each part of an orchestra plays a vital role. Each instrument sounds beautiful on its own for sure, but only when all the instruments perform together as a harmonious body can we fully experience the scope and depth of the music. **CLOSE PIC**

Likewise, understanding how spiritual gifts work in a church body takes seeing each member of the church as an essential individual instrument, vital to the whole body.

And it takes an appreciation for the work of not a human conductor, but the Great Conductor, the HS who gifts and guides each individual according to His will and according to His purpose, the building up of the body of Christ.

The title of tonight's message is God's Good Gifts.

Let's pray

I've heard it said, "There are two great moments in a person's life: the moment you were born and the moment you realize why you were born." And it's the knowing why, that makes the day so important.

God has created each of us with a role, and a purpose. Your birthday is a special day because you are special. You were

created to be used by God. And two factors shape our usefulness in Christ...

First, is our place. In Chapter 12 Paul refers to the Church as a body. As our body consists of many parts working together, so is the Body of Christ. You need me and I need you. A Christian is left frustrated and unfulfilled if they don't ever find their place in the Body of Christ.

The second factor that shapes our usefulness are our gifts. Every believer has at least 1 spiritual gift.

All Christians need to find their place and use their gift.

Chapter 12 begins, **1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant**

Paul wrote this verse, and this chapter, nearly 2000 years ago, and there is still a great ignorance in the Church over the Spirit's gifts.

Even though the Corinthians certainly had problems in their church, God was very active among them. God was at work through the person of the Holy Spirit - the third person of the Godhead.

It's critical to remember that the Holy Spirit is not a force, or vibe, or feeling... He is a person. And God's Spirit was alive and at work in Corinth.

Apparently in Corinth spiritual gifts were commonplace, they just weren't used appropriately. Like in many areas of the church today, there was an ignorance over the proper use of spiritual gifts. And as a result, the gifts were being abused and misused.

1 Corinthians 12 teaches us that God intends for spiritual gifts to unite the Church. Instead, the gifts have often led to its division and to numerous schisms. This is what chapter 12 addresses

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: 2 You know that[fn] you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. The city of Corinth was experience-oriented and self-oriented. Pagan religions and cults were in great abundance. Many of the members at the Corinthian church received their initial religious instruction from cults.

So after being converted to Christianity they had failed to free themselves from pagan attitudes. Not only that, they confused the true work of the Spirit of God with the former pagan experiences.

And notice how Paul describes their former idols-Dumb (mute) idols, which of course do not speak, in contrast with the living God who does speak.

We'll discover the Corinthians were particularly captivated with the vocal gifts - prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. And here we understand why... They were Gentiles who had lived their entire life serving muted gods. Their false gods had no voice. They couldn't speak.

Now as Christians they had an audible God. His Spirit spoke to them and through them. No wonder they'd gotten a little carried away!

3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. People were speaking in

tongues and in utterances that they claimed to be from God, but they were cursing Jesus and denying His deity. Paul said that simply can't be.

What a person says about Jesus Christ, who He is, and what He did is of the utmost importance, because no one filled with the Holy Spirit would curse Jesus or deny His deity.

In other words, every time you hear a voice that says, "Thus saith the Lord," don't assume what comes next is really from the Lord.

I heard the story of a fisherman who cut a hole in the ice. He baited his hook, and was about to drop his bait, when he heard a voice, "No fish are under this ice." He moved a few feet away, and cut another hole. Again he was about to lower his hook, when he heard the voice again, "There are no fish under this ice." He looked up to heaven and shouted, "Lord, is that you?" The voice spoke, "No, it's the ice rink manager."

Not every voice we think is from God meets the criteria. We have to test the voice to identify its source. And here's how every voice should be judged... does it line up with God's Word - both His written Word and His living Word?

God has already spoken to us in two places - through the Bible and through Jesus. Since, He's spoken through the Bible, then this book becomes the sounding board for identifying any other communication that God might want to send us.

Does what I'm hearing line up with what's already been written? God will never contradict Himself... And does what I'm hearing exalt the living Word, Jesus.

God sent His Son to reveal His nature, so any communication from God will honor the heart of Jesus. This is why Paul says no one speaking by the Holy Spirit ever speaks ill of Jesus. The Spirit moves on a person's heart to submit to Jesus' Lordship, and declare their allegiance - not curse Him, or deny His authority.

Whenever we study spiritual gifts, remember miracles can be counterfeited... Egypt's pagan priests were able to duplicate Moses' miracles - up to a point... The end-times Antichrist will work "lying wonders..." Even today, Mormons claim to speak in tongues...

The gifts of the Holy Spirit build up the Body of Christ! They're good for us and bring God glory. That's why Satan does his best to try and discredit them.

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. Here the Greek word translated "spiritual gifts" is "charisma." "Charis" is Greek for "grace" - "mata" is "gift" - thus, spiritual gifts are grace gifts. They're an extension of the grace we've receive in Christ.

Neither salvation or gifts can be earned or purchased by our goodness or good works. They're given freely. And when it comes to these spiritual gifts, or charismas, Christians tend to gravitate toward two extremes - either charismania or charisphobia.

Charisphobia is the belief that the gifts we're about to read, and those in Romans 12 are obsolete. Charisphobia refuses to believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or speaking in tongues or the like. Supernatural manifestations are explained away as having ended with the apostles, that the NT books made spiritual gifts obsolete.

But that's not what the Bible teaches! Nowhere does the NT suggest that healings, and miracles, and tongues, and the like, have passed away. Instead in 14:1 Paul instructs us, **1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.**

We should want and be open to all God's gifts!

Some Christians are afraid of God's "charismas." Whereas, other churches are dominated by them. They're caught up in what's been called, charismania. Charismania happens when Christians become so enamored with the gifts that they neglect the Giver.

This is what happened in Corinth. The Christians were thrilled with supernatural displays of God's power, but that power was wasn't applied to godly living.

Some churches ignore biblical precedent, and chase after the latest thrill, no matter how trivial or silly. They're emotionally-charged rather than biblically-led. Their services are like a circus.

This is why churches need a proper balance... We desperately need the power of God's Spirit, but we also need the knowledge to use that power properly.

I like the quote that says "some churches are a fireplace with no fire. The heart of the church is empty and cold. They're all about orthodoxy, but there's no life, no passion, no fire... Other churches are a fire without a fireplace. There's a spiritual emphasis, but it burns out of control."

We need the fire in the fireplace. We need the fire of God's Spirit, but within the fireplace of God's Word. We want to see people won and warmed - not burned.

I love the adage, “The Word without the Spirit will cause a church to dry up. The Spirit without the Word will cause a church to blow up. But the Spirit working through the Word will cause the church to grow up.”

And the latter is the kind of church we want to be... I’m not charisphobic! Spiritual gifts are for today, and God uses them through us! But I’m also not charismanic! If an experience is not taught in Scripture, I don’t want it!

The Bible is the final authority for faith and practice. I’m against both charisphobia and charismania. Give me the genuine charisma! The gifts of the Spirit, laid out in Scripture, were purchased by the blood of Jesus. And it pleases the Father to see us exercise the gifts His Spirit chooses to allocate to us!

Spiritual gifts should be distinguished from human talents which can operate without divine assistance. Additionally, spiritual gifts should be distinguished from spiritual fruits. The fruit of the spirit describes moral virtues- **Galatians 5:22-23, 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.**

The bible is very clear-we are to USE our spiritual gifts. We can’t just sit on them, or let them collect dust. **1 Peter 4:10. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**

So as we get into this list, what is a spiritual gift? It’s a divine, supernatural ability given by God to enable a Christian to serve

and to minister. It's a special tool for ministry. It really has nothing to do with us, it's all about others.

Sometimes conflict in the church isn't really a result of pride or hidden ambition. It turns out that the problem could be the result of spiritual gifting. The Holy Spirit gives gifts to every believer for the common good of the church.

But unless we realize this, we may fail to appreciate the gifts of other believers. Then it's easy to start harboring the opinion that everyone else should be like us.

Now there's an important detail we haven't addressed yet in verse 4, let's read verse 4 again **4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit**

Diversity, not uniformity, is necessary for a healthy church, and God has seen to it that diversity exists. If you remember earlier in our studies the people at Corinth were elevating certain teachers above another-one saying he was from Paul, another saying he was from Apollos.

And the Corinthians were doing the exact same thing in the area of spiritual gifts. They were preferring one gift over others, and because of this elevation of certain gifts the church was failing to benefit from them all.

It's important to pray for unity, that it's all about Christ in all that we do. But we shouldn't be praying for unity that we all operate the same way, because frankly that's not good for a church.

5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. Believers who have spectacular gifts, ministries, or even effectiveness are not necessarily more spiritual than Christians who do not. Each believer makes a unique contribution "for the common good," not just certain believers. Remember, **COMPARISSON ALWAYS DESTROYS CONTENTMENT**

Comparing income, cars, even ministry's, and spiritual gifts always leads to us not being satisfied.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

The Holy Spirit is always present in and among Christians. Jesus said the Holy Spirit will abide with us forever. However, at some times the Spirit's presence is more apparent than at other times.

There are times when the HS chooses to manifest Himself, that is, to make Himself apparent. But we should never think the Holy Spirit is "more" present when He is manifested through the gifts.

8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, As Paul begins to mention different manifestations, or expressions of the Spirit, he begins by mentioning the word of wisdom. This is the unique ability to speak forth the wisdom of God, especially in an important situation, as shown in Stephen (Acts 7) and Paul (Acts 23).

Remember in Acts 15 the giant debate about new Gentile converts being circumcised? Paul said, "We're going to Jerusalem and hash this out." The early church fathers had a big meeting. They debated back and forth—when suddenly James stood up

and shared with them a perspective that settled the dust and answered the question perfectly in Acts 15.

...8 to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

Now we need to understand the difference between the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. One may have great knowledge, even supernatural knowledge, yet have no wisdom from God in the application of that knowledge

As well, we must always use discernment in receiving a word of knowledge, remembering that God is not the only source of supernatural knowledge. Even if a word is true, it does not mean that it is from God and that the one speaking the word is truly representing God.

Remember Peter knew Ananias was lying in Acts 5 “Why have you lied to the Holy Ghost, Ananias? You’re deceiving yourself,”

How did Peter know Ananias was lying?

It was the word of knowledge.

These operations aren’t ours to use whenever we wish, but only as the Holy Spirit wills—be that once every ten years, or ten times a day.

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, We know faith is an essential part of every Christian’s life, the gift of faith is the unique ability to trust God against all circumstances, as Peter did **Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.”**

Another example of the gift of faith was the Christian leader and philanthropist George Mueller, who in nineteenth century England provided for thousands of orphans completely by prayer, without ever asking for donations.

...9 to another gifts of healings by the same^[fn] Spirit, A lot of folks spend all the time trying to use the gift of healing. Yet clearly the gift of healing is not always God's will. Paul couldn't cure Timothy and his stomach problems, nor could Paul remove his own thorn in the flesh.

10 to another the working of miracles, This describes when the Holy Spirit chooses to "override" the laws of nature.

In the Bible we see the gifts of healing and working of miracles often operate in conjunction with the gift of faith, as in Acts 3:1-8.

We see this also in Acts 14:8-10 8 And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. 9 This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, 10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked

People think if they could just see a miracle or two, their faith would soar. Not so. Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

For the believer, the way to grow in faith is not to see the miraculous, but to take in the Scriptures.

...10 to another prophecy, the telling-forth of God's message in a particular situation, always in accord with His Word and His current work. Sometimes this has the character of foretelling the

future. Acts 11:28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

...10 to another discerning of spirits, This is the gift of discernment-the ability to tell the difference between true and false doctrine, and between what is of the Holy Spirit and what isn't We see this in Acts 16: 16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." 18 And this she did for many days.

But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

Satan appears as an angel of light and he deceives with a false, tempting message.

Sometimes people who seem to say the right things are really from the devil. How we need the gift of discernment in the church today!"

...10 to another different kinds of tongues, Tongues is a personal language of prayer given by God, where the believer can communicate with God beyond the limits of knowledge and understanding. When using the gift of tongues, we agree with God as the Holy Spirit prays through us, though we may not

understand what we are praying, God does. We will spend significant time talking about tongues when we get to chapter 14.

...10 to another the interpretation of tongues. This gift allows the gift of tongues to be of benefit for those other than the speaker, as they are able to hear and agree with the speaker's words to God. We see both the speaking and interpretation in Acts 2 at Pentecost.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. If we move in the operation of the gifts of healing, if we speak prophetically, or if we see miracles flowing from our ministry, Paul is very careful to say it's because of God's sovereignty, rather than anything we've done or deserve.

Remember Acts 8: 18 And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!
21 You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.

The ministry and gifts of the Holy Spirit cannot be earned either through spirituality or through money. They're gifts that are given sovereignly.

The rest of chapter 12 focuses on both the unity and diversity in the Body

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is

Christ. In chapter 1, Paul had rebuked the Corinthian believers for their carnal divisions. Here in chapter 12, he touches the same subject once again. Although each of them had different ministries, operations, and gifts, they were still one entity, one body.

13-18

13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into[fn] one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. Why is the foot a foot and the hand a hand? Because it pleased the Designer to make it so. So, the hand can take no “pride” in being a hand, and the foot can take no “shame” in being a foot. Each serves the pleasure of the Designer.

In the design, we see the wisdom of the God: everybody has something; but nobody has everything.

19-26

19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor

again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. All of the parts of the body work together. The eyes and ears don't only serve themselves, but the whole body. The hands don't only feed and defend themselves, but the whole body. The heart supply's blood the whole body.

Sometimes there is a part of our body that only lives to serve itself. It doesn't contribute anything to the rest of the body, and everything it gets it uses to feed and grow itself. We call this cancer.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

"You" is emphatic in the Greek text and is plural. The Corinthian Christians are in view, but what Paul said of them applies to all groups of Christians. Together we make up the body of Christ, and each of us is an individual member of it.

Now in the last few verses Paul listed eight kinds of members of the body that serve with special functions. This list differs somewhat from the one in verses 8-10 where he identified nine manifestations of the Spirit's working. This list, like the former one, is selective rather than exhaustive.

28-30

28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the best[fn] gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. You know what comes next-1st Corinthians 13. The greatest gift-the gift of love. We can have all the spiritual gifts we could ever imagine, but if we don't have a love, it profits nothing. Love must be the supreme motivator of our use of the gifts for God. Let's pray tonight that love for God, and love for other people would be our ONLY motivation for the gifts the Lord has given us.