

8/25/24

[Connection] Good morning Cornerstone! It is good to be with you this morning. Thank you for joining us. If this is your first time worshiping with us, I want to invite you to fill out our connection card. It just lets us get to know you a little more and be able to connect with you more. If Cornerstone is home for you, you can use our app to check in and let us know you are here. There you can also fill out a prayer request so we can be praying for you throughout the week.

[Title] While you're doing that we are going to dive into our sermon series Church in Crisis. Where we have been studying the book of 1 Corinthians. We are in week 17 of our sermon series. We have been talking about Paul's equipping of the believers in Corinth with the knowledge of the error of their ways. He has also been teaching morally upstanding character as the body of Christ in order to share the gospel to their city effectively. This week we are going to be talking about the topic of spiritual gifts, specifically we are going to be looking at this idea of what it means to be a 'spirit filled' church.

Today our scripture is going to be found in **1 Corinthians 12:1-7**. If you have your bibles, go ahead and turn there, if you would like to follow along with us. If you do not have a paper bible and would like one, we have some available for you in the back. You can also follow along with us today on the app with the scripture and our sermon notes available to you there.

But before we dive in the teaching today, lets read a part of our passage this morning together which comes from the book of **1 Corinthians 12:1**. So let us stand as you are able, out of reverence for God's word as we proclaim the truth in His Scripture.

[1] SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 12:1

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed."

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

INTRO

[2] I want to state this clearly before I begin, this message is not meant to defame other churches, pastors, or people. The goal of this message is for us to be well informed in the things that are a part of the Christian culture. Especially the things that will claim the work of the Holy Spirit but contradicts the scripture. Today we are going to be talking a lot about the gifts of the Holy Spirit but will not dive into too many of the specifics. We will be in the coming weeks but today is more talking about the general aspects of the gifts as a concept.

Now I will mention specific pastors or churches and the things that have been said or the things that they stand for. Again, this is not meant to attack other churches or to try and bring down the body of Christ. We want to be aware of the things that are out there so that we can be aware of false teachers and knowledgeable about the things to avoid.

A lot of this comes from the idea of a church being 'spirit-filled'. I have heard this term quite a bit and maybe you have heard some variation of it. It is often used as a gauge or a way to measure if a church is good or bad by an individual determining if they are 'spirit-filled'. Predominately this term is used in the Pentecostal or the charismatic movement. This is not a dig or a down-casting of Pentecostal denomination churches or having anything against the charismatic movement. I was on staff at a Pentecostal church while I was in college, and I still love that church.

What I have found is that a church that will often claim this characteristic of being 'spirit-filled', are often churches that implement a smoke and mirrors approach to the gospel and especially to the work of the Holy Spirit. When they claim that they are doing the work of the Holy Spirit, it is often a display of talent. By that I mean they demonstrate these gifts of the Spirit to advertise their own holiness or create a perception of their closeness to God. Saying, 'look at how holy I am, I can speak in tongues, and speak prophecy over people' or they may even claim that they have 'raised the dead'.

I have also seen where they will orchestrate their services to be emotionally manipulative. Meaning they will direct and create an emotional experience for people in the church by the types of songs that they sing and will often have a message that is simply the Pastors words and thoughts. Maybe even a 'feel good' message and will sprinkle in bible verses like seasoning. To the point where what they are trying to communicate, often isn't anything God is saying in those verses that they quote or mention.

Now I don't mean planning a service is emotionally manipulative. We plan our services. Picking songs that fit with the things that we are talking about. When I say they are emotionally manipulative I mean that they orchestrate the service to create emotionally vulnerable moments for the people in attendance and in their vulnerable state they capitalize and emotionally manipulate people to perpetuate their own agendas, propaganda or doctrine to make the people listening emotionally dependent on their leadership.

The outcome of this is that they have a church of people that come for the emotional experience, and often times their faith is based on their ability to have that emotional experience. This creates a huge problem for their church members. When the emotional high that they feel in their church is gone, it will often lead to questioning of the church and doubt in entire system of belief. Because they realize their faith wasn't based on God at all but their emotional experiences in their place of worship.

These churches and teachers will often have an over emphasis on the display of the spiritual gifts. They will fuel the emotional experience by their leaders demonstrating these gifts frequently and in a profound moment. They may even require it of their congregation to encourage or even require their emotional investment. They will say things like speaking in tongues is a requirement for salvation. Which is mandated nowhere in scripture. Saying that if someone has not spoken in tongues then they are truly not saved.

They will encourage a fake-it-till-you-make-it type of faith. If someone has not experienced these displays of faith in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, then they are to just pretend until the Holy Spirit genuinely shows up for them in their pretending. I swear I wish that I was making this up. What it does is it takes the work of the Holy Spirit and it shrouds it in mystery. Like the access to the Holy Spirit is this secret knowledge or the work of the Holy Spirit is unknown and it cannot be known, unless you become a member of their church.

Paul's instruction in our passage this morning contradicts all of that. In the first verse of this chapter, he says that not only can it be known but as believers that they should possess this knowledge to not be deceived.

BODY

[3] 1 Corinthians 12:1

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed."

Paul's desire is for the people to possess information or to be knowledgeable of God and the way that he works. It implies that there are things to be known about the Holy Spirit. This continues what he said in chapter 2, that the believer can know how God is working and God himself is something to be known by the believer. The work of the Holy Spirit and the his gifts is not some secret knowledge that is only possessed by the elite or the mature believer.

[4] Jesus taught his disciples that the Holy Spirit is going to come and the role that he will play in the life of the believer. He states that the Spirit exists to achieve 3 things. The Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer to convict people of sin¹, equip the believer with the knowledge of Scripture² and to shape us to reflect the character of Christ³. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are used to achieve these 3 things for the benefit of the church. As Paul states in the next verses, we are to understand and possess this knowledge to avoid being deceived away from the God of the bible.

[5] To reduce the Holy Spirit to these three purposes, the argument that I have heard from these 'spirit-filled' church and other believers, is that these parameters put God 'in a box'. Implying that God is all powerful and therefore to have limitations on what God can and cannot do is to look at God with a narrowed focus and eliminated the vast array of things that the all-powerful God is capable of.

To that I would respond, they are right in the sense that scripture does not put a limit to God's ability or his power, however, God does describe in his word parameters of his nature and work, in order to clearly distinguish his work from that of another. He says to those who believe, "within these parameters, I will work. Work that is done outside of these parameters is not me."

In Chapter 14, Paul states that God is not a God of confusion⁴. God works to bring himself glory. To make it clear who is the recipient of that glory, he states clear how he works so that it is unmistakable. Because there is another that wishes to steal that glory away from God⁵. God would not create clear boundaries, only to break them as he wishes later, even if it was a demonstration of the power that he is capable of. That would be clearly confusing for believers for God to not follow the ordinances that he set in place.

We cannot claim that all things that we can't be explain as God's handiwork, because there is a danger in it.

[6] There are somethings that cannot be explained that insight fear which is not God purpose for believers. A Magician can do a card trick which will bring us amazement, but the trick is done to bring the magician praise, even though it could be explained through slight of hand or trickery. To the one that is witnessing the trick it appears to be without explanation. God does not desire to trick people into believing in him with gags and illusions. He gathers believers to himself with the demonstration of his power pointing to him being the all-powerful God, unlike any other spiritual or metaphysical being⁶.

[7] 1 Corinthians 12:2

"You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led."

¹ John 16:8,

² John 15:26, 16:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:3

³ Galatians 5:22-23

⁴ 1 Corinthians 14:33

⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:4

⁶ God is the only super-natural being. Demons, and Satan himself, are what is referred to as preternatural, meaning they are above our human understanding and outside of our knowledge of natural order. But they are and always will be subject to and beneath the power of God who is the supreme being.

Deception does not require miraculous signs, because the believers that Paul is addressing here have come out of pagan worship where they were deceived into worshiping inanimate objects that possess no power and had no signs and wonders. Yet, they captivated their worship. How much greater would the deception be with flashy signs that cannot be explained.

[8] This is why snake-oil salesman were so successful in the 1800's. They would make these claims of miraculous healing if you just bought their product. They fought against the other competitors claiming a miracle cure, to prove themselves to be authentic. If you displayed the greatest sign, people would believe you over others and increased your sales.

Unfortunately, we see this a lot from churches and teachers falling into this snake-oil salesman method. If they can produce signs and wonders then they are more believable and they will gain more followers, influence and income. This is why the knowledgeable believer is dangerous to the world.

They can see past the smoke and mirrors and their claims of 'signs and wonders' in order to know when God is moving and when he isn't. The knowledgeable believers, that Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to be, know the parameters that God has set in place. Paul is telling the church, the way that they are to avoid deception in their beliefs is through knowledge of the scripture, knowledge of God and knowledge of the Holy Spirit.

[9] **1 Corinthians 12:3**

"Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says 'Jesus is accursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit."

Paul is telling them that God is not divided. Even though we believe in a triune God, where he exists in 3 persons he is unified as one God. He will never go against himself and he will not contradict himself. The Holy Spirit, who is one of the persons of the trinity, will never led someone or speak through someone in a way that goes against the teachings of God or speaks in a blasphemous way.

Now I know what you're thinking many of the church that would fall into the categories that I have described will all say that Jesus is God. None of them will speak blasphemous and say that 'Jesus is cursed' as Paul describes here. You are right in that it would not be explicit, in this exact wording but let's look at some examples to show you what I mean.

[10] Bethel church in Redding California, is one of the most popular churches in the US. With around 11,000 members and a global online presence. They have a bible college that trains students for ministry under their teachings. They have a music production company that has made over \$18 million in the music industry. Many of the Christian songs that we sing in church or you hear on the radio are written, performed, copyrighted by or produced by Bethel Music or their other label Jesus Culture.

The Pastor of Bethel Church is Bill Johnson. He is a published author, and his sermons are watched by millions of people. He said on 3 different occasions, in 2 of his books, and published articles,

[11] *"While Jesus is eternally God, **He emptied Himself of His divinity and became a man** (see Phil. 2:7). It's vital to note that He did all His miracles **as a man, not as God**. If He did them as God, I would still be impressed. **But because He did them as a man***

yielded to God, I am now unsatisfied with my life, being compelled to follow the example He has given us. Jesus is the only model for us to follow.⁷

In this quote and others like it, Bill Johnson denies the deity of Christ on earth in order to claim the works and miracles of Jesus are achievable for humanity. As he claims, Jesus performed them in his humanity not out of a divine nature. Where he did not say that Jesus is accursed, he does deny that Jesus was God in flesh on earth, which is saying the same thing. Pastors like Joel Osteen and His wife Victoria have been quoted saying similar things. Like Jesus was a man until God touched him and made him something more.

[12] Todd White who is the Pastor of Lifestyle church in Watauga, Texas. Said when talking about 2 Corinthians 5:21, where it says Jesus became sin, who knew no sin. He says that Jesus became guilty of sin, he says that Jesus ‘became a gossip, a murderer, full of strife, deceit and malice.’ He confused imputation meaning Jesus took on the punishment of sin in order to serve as atonement. Instead, Todd White teaches that Jesus became guilty of sin which would make him no longer the perfect sacrificial lamb.

I wish that I could say that these Pastors and statements like this were just outliers on the fringe of the Christian culture, but they’re not. Steven Furtick is quoted as saying “I am God almighty” because of the covenant with God and his people that he has somehow achieved divine status because of the Holy Spirit. Or Seth Dahl another Pastor out of Bethel claimed that Jesus came to him in a vision. He says that Jesus asked Pastor Seth to forgive him because Jesus felt guilty of the sin from another believer against Seth. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of these Pastors that claim to be speaking on behalf of the Holy Spirit that cry out Jesus is accursed and yet attempt to claim belief in him as well.

[13] Paul’s claim of ‘Jesus Christ is Lord’ is deeper than just in empty words that anyone can say that is void of belief and power. To claim Jesus is Lord through the Holy Spirit it is a claim of both word and deed. We cannot claim that Jesus is the Lord of our life if our lives do not stand as a reflection of that claim. Paul is addressing concern of the Corinthians about this spirit-inspired speech in their worship gatherings.

In Corinth, there was an over-emphasis on the gift of speaking in tongues. He is reassuring the believers that no one can claim to speak under the power of the Holy Spirit and be blasphemous against God. God is not divided in nature or in his work. Someone that is claiming to be speaking by the spirit, the context of it must be edifying, not blasphemous and affirms Jesus Christ is Lord, in their words and in the way that they live their lives.

Because the 3 purposes of the Holy Spirit are all exemplified in both word and deed. Conviction of sin, in word and deed. Knowledge of the scripture, to be proclaimed in word and lived out in deed. To be made in the image of Christ in both word and deed.

Speaking under the Lordship of Christ is not an utterance of affliction. Meaning that it is not spoken out of impulse or a need for something to be proclaimed. Lordship is a demonstration of being under a master, and a servitude to that master. If someone is speaking on behalf of the one that is Lord over them it will be deeply rooted in the things that the Master has said before and it will be demonstrated as true in the work of the master as they continue about their business. This is the difference between

⁷ “Face to Face with God” pg 108, Chisma Magazine (2014) “Claiming the power to heal like Jesus did”, “Heaven Invading Earth” pg 29.

someone fighting the urge to speak their mind and someone speaking out of the obedience to what the Holy Spirit is leading them to say.

We have to understand Paul is writing a letter to this church for a correction of bad theology. For that perspective, when it comes to the gifts of the Spirit, especially those that demonstrate speaking on God's behalf like tongues or prophecy, if God was going to give this gift of speaking on his behalf, he would not give this gift to proclaim the gospel to someone with bad theology⁸. In other words God would not give this gift to someone that does not know the God that they are speaking on behalf of.

Essentially, Paul is dismissing the things that have been told to the believers in the church by those who claim to speak in the name of the Holy Spirit. Whatever they had said before is completely false, because they did not weigh it against the knowledge of the Scripture.

This is why Paul does not want them to be uninformed. They are to know the God they serve and are to know how God has worked and will continue to work so that they can avoid being deceived by false claims, false teachers, and believers who are deceived by a spirit other than God.

[14] Romans 12:1-2

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

[15] This understanding and premise of a basis of knowledge, has to be the foundation to everything that we believe about the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For those of us that think we understand what the gift of the Holy Spirit are and how they are practiced in our world, go to the scripture and equip yourselves with the knowledge of what God has outlined as his work. No matter what you have been taught, no matter what you have experienced or think you have witnessed, the work of the Holy Spirit will be rooted in the knowledge of truth not in human experiences that can be easily manipulated.

[16] We cannot validate truth, with our experiences. We validate our experiences, with the truth.

This will be extremely challenging for some. These next couple weeks as we dive into what these gifts are and practically how they are implemented in the church, if the scripture challenges your belief of them, we are supposed to change our belief, not try to shoehorn scripture to fit our previous understanding. Paul is not telling the believers; I want you to have this experience so that you can know God and not be deceived. No, he says I want you to possess knowledge so that you can avoid the deception. Knowledge comes through his word and the Holy Spirit demonstrates his abilities when believers demonstrate true lordship in word and deed.

[17] 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone."

⁸ John MacArthur

The gifting of the Holy Spirit is rooted in the unity of God in his nature and work. As we said before, The Holy Spirit is not going to speak or act in a way that contradicts God's nature or word. Paul in describing this unity points to the trinity and all parts of it. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit, the same Lord is a reference to Jesus Christ, God the Son, and them being of the same God is pointing to God the Father.

He is saying that a believer can demonstrate these gifts when they are in unity with the God that is unified with himself. Which means that we cannot be unified with a God that we do not know and understand, because he is a God that can be known. We can know him through his work in history and through the way that he has made himself known both things are found in his word.

[18] The gifts that are of the Holy Spirit are various. Despite the Corinthians focus on the gift of speaking in tongues, which arguably is still heavily focused on in our world today. Speaking in tongues is not the only gift of the Holy Spirit that he demonstrates through his people. Which this verse says that God empowers all of the gifts in everyone. The word used for gift is the word 'charisma' in Greek. It means 'something that is given by grace'.

The church was probably proclaiming that these gifts being demonstrated through them was something that they possessed. This is a false premise that Paul is confronting. We can never claim we somehow possess ownership over these gifts. They do not belong to us, and we cannot demonstrate them apart from the Holy Spirit. They are things that are given and demonstrated through believers as evidence of the grace of God. Grace that can only come from God and cannot be from ourselves. God is the giver of grace and the only one that can give it to others.

Because we have to acknowledge God as the source of these gifts that Paul is about to list in a representative list, we have to know that these are miraculous. They are not a sharpenable skill that we can gain through practice. We cannot get better or more skilled at the gift of speaking in tongues or prophecy or healing. We do not possess them, God does, and we cannot demonstrate them based on our will or desire to do so. It is solely dependent on the will and gifting of the Holy Spirit according to the grace that is given by his will, not our own. It is God that empowers the gift. The Holy Spirit gives the gifts at a point in time and to a specific individual that is determined by him to achieve his purpose. To which Paul says is...

[19] 1 Corinthians 12:7

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given with purpose and that purpose is from the grace of God to benefit the church as a whole, as the body of Christ. Notice that Paul said that this is not the benefit of self, but for the common good. Demonstrating that the recipient of the gifts of the Spirit are many. They are for the benefit of the body of Christ through God's grace as he empowers in his will.

The gifts are given in diversity among the believers, meaning that they are all given because the gifts are various and are in multiple different facets. They reveal the activity of the Spirit within the church community. Each person does not have his or her gift. Each is given a multitude of gifts, and the gifts are shared among believers because it is for the benefit of the whole body.

APPLICATION

[20] Over the course of the next couple weeks, we are going to be diving into the specific gifts that are listed in this chapter and others. The premise that Paul establishes in these 7 verses is the beginning of

our approach to the gifts of the Spirit. Paul desires that all believers are informed about the boundaries of the Spirit and its gifts.


Because here is the thing, these gifts are not unique to Christianity. In the sense that many pagan cultures and religious practices demonstrate speaking in unknown language, other religions claim to speak prophecy over the future. Other religions claim to have the power of miraculous healing abilities. We can know when something is being done by God or by another being by the parameters and boundaries that God has set in place.

Paul gives 3 boundaries.

[21] The Spirit first and foremost is unified with God the Father and Christ the Son. He cannot and will not blaspheme himself. He will not speak against or contradict himself in his work. Everything that the Holy Spirit does, draws from within himself to remain in perfect union within the trinity. That means what is said or done through these gifts is going to line up with his word in perfect union with truth.

[22] The second boundary is that the Spirit is the source of these gifts. It is not owned and operated by the believer. We are simply the vessel in which the will of the Father is done and the gifting is presented by the action of the Holy Spirit through his people. The purpose of these gifts is to draw men to himself.

Foolishness at the hands of a fallible human being attempting to wield the power and gift of God will never bring God the glory that he deserves. Which is why God sovereignty extends not just behind the scenes but in the display of his power through his people. He wills it, enacts it, practices it and perfects it. We just happen to be the ones he uses when we are in union with him.



[23] The third boundary is that God is not a God of chaos, so the work of the Holy Spirit cannot and will not create confusion when it comes to who God is, what he is doing in the world and the proclamation of the gospel message. There is not a secret language or a secret power that is only available to a select few. If we look at what we have studied so far in this book in almost every chapter of this book Paul has addressed how the church has marginalized people.

They did it in their practices as a church both outside and inside the community. They were division which marginalized people. With their sexual immorality they forced people into the fringe of their salvation. In the Lawsuits against fellow believers they jeopardized the sanctity of the community through their conflict. In their stances on marriage they excommunicated their own spouses from their belief system. In their idolatry they created stumbling blocks for their weaker brothers and sisters. In their gender roles they attempted to usurp God's design for humanity and create a sort of rebellion. In the Lord's supper they pushed out the poor so that they could not participate in the sacrament of communion communicating their desire to exclude them from salvation.

The Spiritual gifts were no exemption. They paraded around their abilities and their access to a Holy Spirit they were not even in contact with. Like a snake-oil salesmen they attempted to claim authenticity and maturity but all they had to offer was their own fallible nature and not the nature and gifts of God. We see the same in the modern church with this claim of 'spirit-filled' as if it is some achievement that they have earned by their actions. That's not how it works. We know that is not how it works, because we are not uninformed.

All three of these boundaries are kept and upheld by the Holy Spirit in order to achieve his ministry which Jesus said is to convict people of sin⁹, equip the believer with the knowledge of Scripture¹⁰ and to shape us to reflect the character of Christ¹¹. We learn understand and measure any and all spiritual experiences against the ministry of the Spirit and the boundaries of the gifts because we are the knowledgeable believers that are avoiding deception.

Some of you looked forward to talking about the gifts of the spirit to either be educated on them or to disagree, because your experiences do not align with what you thought I might say about them. Here is where I will be honest with you. I grew up in a church that taught that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased. As in they happened when the church was being established and they are no longer available or necessary for the church today. We will talk more about this point of view next week, but that is the context that I came from. There was a long journey that I have been on where I had to look into the text to find out what it was that I believed about the gifts.

[24] So, I have a challenge for all of us as we discuss this topic. Forget everything that you thought you know about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some of you are like 'okay, done I didn't know anything about it to begin with'. Other of you are thinking, 'well the gifts of the spirit are vital to my spiritual life I don't know if I can do that'. Here is why I say that...

When we walk into this discussion with a preconceived notion about what we already believe about the gifts, all that we are going to be able to see are the things that will support our outlook on them currently. Even in studying these things, my thoughts and opinions had to change about them, because the text did not align with my previous understanding. We must walk into this discussion with the goal of becoming informed. Our desire is to grasp a full and complete understanding of the God we serve through his revealed word, in what it means to carry out these gifts as a believer.

We must look at the things that God will equip us with, to see how the Lord is working. See the boundaries as they apply to each of these gifts equipped with the full knowledge of these things for the purpose of being able to avoid deception, just like Paul's hope for the church in Corinth. We will often be resistant to accepting certain text that may not align with our previous understanding. If we do that we are closing the door to a fuller picture of the gifts because they do not fit what we want to hear. So when it comes to the gifts of the Holy Spirit we have to come in with a fresh perspective.

Jesus said that their will come a day where we will worship him in Spirit and in truth¹². That day has come and so we must worship accordingly. We will worship in Spirit, meaning in close connection to God, an engagement of the whole heart with a fervent passion for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in complete and desperate union with a God that is unified. Where we worship in spirit, we also must worship in truth, with full engagement of our minds¹³. Informed of the knowledge of God that is revealed through his word and our worship should be in complete and total alignment with his word.

[25] As a church we desire to be 'spirit-filled' not as a badge of honor but as a complete dependance on the Holy Spirit. A church and a people that pours out in worship to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in

⁹ John 16:8,

¹⁰ John 15:26, 16:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:3

¹¹ Galatians 5:22-23

¹² John 4:23-24

¹³ 1 Corinthians 14:14-15

Spirit and in Truth, under the Lordship in Word and Deed, in perfect union with a triune God that is unified, and in obedience to God who has made himself known.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

COMMUNION