

## 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 The Holy Spirit Gives Gifts Pt 3

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro  
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A few weeks ago, we were making our way verse by verse through 1 Corinthians when we came across Chapter Twelve, verse one which warned us not to be ignorant about Spiritual Gifts. So, we put our verse by verse study on hold for a bit and we've been doing more of a topical study looking at the Holy Spirit who gives these gifts and when we're done we'll get back into 1 Corinthians where we'll start looking at each of the gifts individually.

In our first topical study, if you remember, we noticed that the Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – He has always been around and has always been God, and, He's a He, not an It – not a mysterious force or experience. We also looked at the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and saw how He came upon various leaders and prophets throughout the history of Israel. We noticed too that the Holy Spirit had a very important role to play in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Then last week, we looked primarily at the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the church. You remember that we said the Holy Spirit calls us into the Church, and we said that while He dwells in each of us individually as Christians, He also dwells among us in a unique way when we gather corporately. We talked about how we're spiritual Legos – not much good all by ourselves, but you can make all kinds of stuff if you have a whole pile of them to fit together.

Well, now this morning we're going to talk about the ministry of the Holy Spirit to each of us individually. We're going to ask the question - what does the Holy Spirit do in the life of every single Christian? And the answers, if you don't know are kind of amazing. Whether you're in the fourth grade or in your forties or beyond – Yahweh, Jehovah, Abba, the Creator of the entire known universe and everything in it – somehow dwells inside every Christian and engages with us individually.

Turn with me in your Bibles over to Titus chapter 3 and we'll dig into this a little deeper.

When we jump in here we find Paul giving some instructions about how Christians should live differently – there should be a distinction between what the life of a Christian and a non-Christian looks like. So Paul tells Titus, the pastor of the local church to:

**1 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. 3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.**

But something changed. The Bible says our lives used to be one way, in fact, the lives of other people still are that way, but we should be different now. Why? What happened?

4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared  
(that's a reference to Jesus),  
5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He  
saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

So here's the first big thing we see about the Holy Spirit's ministry to us individually: He brings what Jesus has done to us.

Jesus did the work of dying on the cross in our place, but then the Holy Spirit brings what Jesus has done down into our individual lives – He washes us and renews us in light of what Jesus did. The word we see here is regeneration – genesis means beginning or creation – so regeneration means to re-create, or begin again. That's what God offers you – the chance to start all over again, to be born again as Jesus told Nicodemus, to hit the reset button on your life by coming to Christ. That's what's available to you. It's already happened if you are a Christian, and if you're not a Christian yet, it can happen to you right now, by simply confessing your sins and asking God for forgiveness in Christ.

And that's not all – look at what else he has to say about the Holy Spirit in the next verse:

6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that  
having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of  
eternal life.  
8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those  
who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things  
are good and profitable to men.

Did you notice that? He said God pours out the Holy Spirit on us abundantly.

Listen, God's not concerned about efficiency. He's not looking for cost saving measures. He's not taking a hard look at the budget to see what can be cut. He's extravagant. He wants to pour out the Holy Spirit in your life abundantly.

But here is where we run into a little bit of confusion in the Church. And I mean big C church – that is all forms of Christianity. You see, there's a bit of confusion out there regarding what our personal experience of and with the Holy Spirit should look like.

Some would have you believe that there is no discernable impact – it's all just theological reality, you acknowledge it, you accept it, you confess it, and you move on – any sort of an 'experience' other than an emotional response to your forgiveness is highly suspect and probably the result of overactive emotionalism at best or demonic influence at worst.

On the other hand, there are those, especially within some forms of Pentecostalism who say if you have truly encountered the Holy Spirit there will be external evidence in your life,

they say you'll speak in tongues – you'll say things you don't understand in a language you've never learned as you pray and praise God. And there are whole sections of the Church that believe that if that hasn't been your experience, then you haven't truly been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

I'm telling you I know this from personal experience.

Many of you know that I moved from California to Virginia to go to seminary so that I could go back into the military as a Calvary Chapel Chaplain. I knocked out 90 units of graduate study at the seminary in two years. I was killing myself. But the idea was to get it over as quickly as possible so that I could go back on active duty as a chaplain and to do that you need two things – you need ecclesiastical credentials (that's a fancy way for saying that some church group has to sponsor you as their representative) and you need academic credentials – you have to have a seminary degree.

Well, when I graduated with my academic credentials, since I was already backed by Calvary, I put in my application to go on active duty. But the recruiter shocked me when he called back and said Calvary Chapel was no longer able to endorse chaplains. There had been some changes in the staff that were involved in making the authorizations on the Calvary Chapel end, and somehow that information never got properly passed to the Department of Defense. It was your typical bureaucratic hiccup.

The problem was, it meant my entire life was on hold. I had graduated from seminary, which I went to solely to get the academic credential, but I couldn't go any further without also having the second credential from a church group. So, I started looking around to see if I could find another church group with similar views who would accept me while Calvary Chapel got things straightened out.

The first place I looked was at our seminary because they also had an endorsing group. I had served as the President of the Student Body, graduated with honors, had great relationships with the professors, when I met with the endorser he was thrilled that I was interested. It makes great headlines in the school paper – Seminary Student Body president off to the serve the troops!

I walked out his office full of joy...until I got his email later that day and I noticed that in their statement of faith they said they didn't believe that all of the spiritual gifts are available today. They don't believe that the Holy Spirit still does anything miraculous like enabling people to speak in tongues and I had to sign a document saying I would never do it myself.

Well, I don't personally speak in tongues. I've asked God for that experience before, prayed and prayed that He would give it to me and He's always said no. But I do believe that it can happen today – I do believe God still does those things, so there's no way I could sign their statement of faith.

So then, I shared my situation with a friend of mine – he and I shared very similar views – God can do things like that today, but He doesn't always and He doesn't have to. This friend was also studying to become a chaplain so he gave me his endorser's number. He says, "Call this guy and talk to him – we'll get you taken care of, you can be one of us for a while."

So I call my friend's endorser and I tell him my whole story, how Calvary Chapel had lost their status, they were working to get it restored, and I was looking for help in the meantime. And I told him my story of not being able to sign the statement of faith for the group affiliated with the seminary because I believe it is possible for people to speak in tongues today – I don't do it myself, but I do believe it's possible and I couldn't just hide my convictions.

And he says, "Wait, you don't personally speak in tongues?" And I said, "No, but I believe it's possible, I believe it's for today, it's just that God hasn't given it to me." And he said, "Oh, well that's a problem, because, you see, all of our chaplains are filled with the Holy Spirit as evidenced by their speaking in tongues. But I can pray with you to receive that gift." And I said, "No, thank you" and quietly hung up the phone – I had forgotten that my friend who believes they're for today but not mandatory, actually did speak in tongues.

So, I got rejected from both sides for believing that God can, but doesn't always, give us an external experience to accompany the internal work He is doing as the Holy Spirit regenerates and renews us. Maybe you had some sort of experience when you came to salvation, or maybe a later date, or maybe you didn't – I want you to know that either situation is OK. God doesn't have a cookie-cutter approach for how He deals with us. What happens will always look the same on the inside – it has to, there's only one way to be saved – the have the Holy Spirit wash and regenerate you in light of Christ's work on the cross, but don't expect your external experience to exactly match that of anyone else.

If you have been saved, if you are truly a Christian, the Holy Spirit IS dwelling in you, *whether you feel like it or not*. You can count on it. **Romans 8:9b** says – "**Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.**" Either you have the Holy Spirit in you or you don't. There is no middle ground. And although you can quench the Holy Spirit or grieve the Holy Spirit, He's not going to leave you.

Turn with me in your Bibles to John 14 and you'll see what I mean. Here we pick things up in the Upper Room with Jesus and the disciples on the night before He is crucified. Jesus knows He's about to die, so He's warning them of what's going to happen and letting them know that even though He is going to be gone soon physically, the Holy Spirit is going to rush in and take His place so to speak:

**John 14: 15** "If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

“Another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.” Forever. That’s how the long the Holy Spirit is going to abide with you.

Take comfort in that and think about what it means.

For one thing, it means you’re never alone even when you feel like you are. When you’re in the car, or when you’re traveling, or when you’re staying in the dorms during the semester break when everyone else goes home, when your spouse is travelling, or Friday night when you’re single and don’t have a date or anyone to hang out with – you are never truly alone – God is not only watching over you, He is actually there with you.

And then Jesus says, “He dwells with you, and will be in you” – that transformation occurs at salvation – the Holy Spirit goes from being on the outside calling you to God, to being on the inside sealing you for salvation. Think of the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life like God’s engagement ring. When a man puts a ring on a woman’s finger, it’s a symbol of intent. It shows her, in a way she can touch and feel and see, that he has made a promise that he will soon fulfill. Scripture says the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives should convey a very similar idea to us.

**Eph 1: 13** says that we trusted Christ “after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

His presence in our lives is God’s guarantee. It’s an idea repeated throughout Scripture because God wants us to know for sure that we are His.

**Romans 8:16** the Holy Spirit bears witness “with our spirit that we are children of God.”

**1 John 3:24** “And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us”

He’s with *us* now on earth and one day we will be with *Him* in Heaven.

So, if you are a Christian today, you don’t need to ask God to come and dwell in you, He already does! That would be like a woman who is engaged asking her fiancé – are you really going to marry me? At first he understands, because it’s kind of shocking, and it’s a big deal, but if she keeps asking and keeps asking, if she ignores the evidence on her finger, at some point you can’t help the man for getting a little frustrated.

Well, for us, as Christians, we don’t need to keep asking God into our lives, if anything we need to ask Him to help us recognize that He’s already here and to help us become increasingly aware of that because the Bible also has a lot to say about how the Holy Spirit wants to lead us and direct us in life.

**Romans 8:13** For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

There are all kinds of voices speaking into your life and they're not all leading you in the same direction. It's important to take a little time out every now and then ask yourself – who or what is leading me? Is it the Spirit? Do you know? How and why are you making the choices you're making?

And do you know that sometimes God leads you in directions you didn't want to, or hadn't thought of going, at least initially – like maybe bringing you to DC? Turn with me over to the book of Acts. Here we find the apostle Paul out traveling on a mission trip and he's got some good ideas about where to go, he's putting together his dream sheet, his wish list for the next assignment but it's not going to happen:

**Acts 16:6** Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia (modern Turkey). 7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. 8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia (modern Greece) stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Sometimes God's will is discovered as other doors, good doors, slam shut – would it have been good to go to preach in Asia, or in Bithynia? Of course – but God had something better in store.

How many of you wound up here and DC wasn't your first choice? Maybe it's because God has a plan for you and your time here. Maybe while you're here, God will grant you the equivalent of a vision that leads to Macedonia. Paul had some difficulties when he arrived there, but he also saw churches started in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. And those names should sound familiar because he later wrote at least five letters to those churches that became Scripture – the books of Philippians, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians all came after God closed several other doors.

Now that doesn't mean following God is easy. That doesn't mean if you can just be led by the Spirit everything will go smoothly in your life. I wish I could tell you that. I want it to be true, for a while I thought I was – I was searching for the Holy Spirit's easy street. But it doesn't exist, at least not permanently. Just because your life is hard doesn't mean what you're doing is wrong. In Acts 20 Paul says that he knows his life is about to get pretty rough – the Holy Spirit has telling him what to expect, but that doesn't necessarily mean he's supposed to avoid it.

**Acts 20:22** ...I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit warns you about things He wants you to avoid and other times He's just giving you a heads up so you don't give up. Keep following Him, listening to Him, seeking Him, and you'll know which is which.

I know we've covered a lot of different ideas this morning – you could take an entire doctoral level seminary course on the Holy Spirit, books upon books have been written about His ministry to us, we're not going to answer every question anyone has ever had – but we're trying to slowly and surely increase our understanding of what the Holy Spirit has done and is doing in us.

And we're doing that for a very deliberate reason – once we understand what the Holy Spirit has done in us, we're better prepared to understand what the Holy Spirit wants to do through us as He distributes the Spiritual Gifts. We said last week, people talk a lot about inviting God into your life, I want you to consider inviting God out of life – not to leave you, but to flow through you from the inside out. And we'll look at that next week as we get closer to our study of the individual gifts.

But for now, we're going to celebrate communion – and as they pass out the elements I encourage you to consider yourself before God – are you holding yourself back from Him? Maybe you've never surrendered to Him and you need to become a Christian – if so, simply ask God to forgive you of your sins in light of what Christ has done for you on the Cross and invite Him to come rushing in to your life and make real all the stuff we've talked about this morning – you can do that all by yourself where you sit – there's no magic formula – He sees and knows your heart.

And if you're already a Christian, are you holding anything back from God? Are you resisting Him in any way? Tap out – cry uncle. Wave your white flag and put back down the things you're trying to hold on to. Ask God to help you know His presence in your life – to make it more obvious to you and let's celebrate all He has done and is doing for us.