

## **1 Corinthians 12:1-11** **The Spirit Gives Gifts**

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro  
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For the next couple of months we're going to slow down on Sunday mornings and take more of a topical look at the Holy Spirit and the subject of spiritual gifts based on what we read here in 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13 and 14.

And as we do that, I want you to know I'm hoping and fervently praying that God will speak to you boldly and clearly about changes He wants to make in your life as you respond to what we see in Scripture. I'm praying you will invite God into your life if you haven't already, and that even if you have, you'll reassess your relationship with Him and put *everything* on the table – every aspect, every relationship, every past memory, every habit - and freely submit to His guidance in every area your life.

I'm praying, and I'm eagerly expecting that we're about to enter a season of growth as a body – not necessarily numerical growth, but spiritual growth - that people will take massive leaps forward in their faith as God begins to poke and prod us with His Word.

As we look at the Spiritual Gifts and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, I'm praying that He will fill you to overflowing and use you in ways you've never known before, or that you haven't been used in lately.

I am absolutely, unashamedly hopeful that God will do something radical in our church in the coming weeks as we learn more about Him. Why is that? Two reasons: first of all, it's because God is so great, so vast, and if there is any way that I could know more of Him – be more connected to Him, more aware of Him and His presence in my life, I want that. Don't you?

And second, it's because the needs in our lives and the lives around us are so great. The world is falling apart at the seams, but there are also incredible opportunities around us with the churches in Alexandria and Reston and the hope of seeing a new church started in Bethesda. And churches are cool because that's where people gather to worship God and be equipped to reach out and touch the lives of other people. And the people around us, and even we ourselves, could use an awful lot of ministry.

But the problem is we're already busy people, we say– I'm crushed, I'm swamped, "where did the summer go?" So honestly, the prospect of doing more, or doing something else, even if it's for God can sound a little draining. Where am I going to get the time, the energy, the resources to make another commitment?

Well, that's what excites me. You see there's good news because it turns out that the God who commands us to love also wants to give us the ability to obey that command. He wants to do incredible, miraculous, supernatural things *through you* that glorify Him and affect others. And He does that through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and that's what we're going to be studying in the coming months.

So read with me, if you will, these first eleven verses of 1 Corinthians 12 – verses we will be seeing a lot of and let's see what God might have for us this morning:

1 Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: 2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. 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.

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 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. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Now, eventually we're going to go verse-by-verse through 1 Corinthians 12, but first we need to go back farther and set the stage for what we've read here. We need to know – who or what is this Holy Spirit that gives these gifts? So we'll talk about that today. We won't finish answering the question, but we'll outline His activity in the Old Testament, we'll consider what sort of relationship He had with Jesus, we'll learn how He impacted the early church, and then we'll ask how all of that applies to our own lives. You'll get a little seminary today, and if you want to go get the notes off the website tonight or tomorrow, they're chock full of references for you to be able to look things up and go a little deeper.

So, let's start with something kind of basic: Christians believe in a triune God. This puts us radically at odds with Jews and Muslims - all three would be considered monotheistic faiths, that is, they believe in one god - but Christians have a radically different understanding of the nature of God because we believe He is three in one – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All of them being equally God, but always considered as one.

Christians of all sorts – Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Baptist, non-denominational - they all believe that God has always existed exactly as He is and He will never change. They all believe the Holy Spirit is God, has always been God, and will always be God.

And notice, I keep saying HE – the Holy Spirit is not an “it” not a force, not a concept or idea. Maybe you’ve heard Him referred to as the Holy Ghost – and wondered, where does that come from? It’s from the old King James translation of the Bible – when they translated the Bible into English, over 400 years ago in 1611, they chose the word ghost. The problem is, language changes over time and now the term Holy Ghost isn’t that helpful – it makes us think of a floating sheet with some holes in it and a halo over the head. That’s why most of your modern translations say “Holy Spirit.”

So again, He’s not just a force or a power, He has personality and is personally involved in the lives of men and women.

When God called Abraham out of Ur and began to unfold His plan with Israel, the Holy Spirit was frequently involved. The Bible tells us He came upon, ministered to, or filled Israel’s early leaders - men like Joseph (Gen 41:38), Moses (Num 11:17), and Joshua (Num 17:28).

He came upon the High Priest (2 Chron 24:20) and the elders of the nation (Num 11:25), and His presence led the Israelites in the desert (Neh 9:20; Isa 63:10) and filled first the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34) and later the Temple (1 Kings 8:10).

When you read the book of Judges you see the Holy Spirit regularly using men like Othniel (3:10), Gideon (6:34), Jephthah (11:29) and of course Samson (14:6, 19; 15:14-15) to rise up and lead or protect the fledgling Jewish nation before they had a king. Let’s take Samson as an example.

Before he was born Israel had fallen away from God – they were doing their own thing and drifting as a nation – sound familiar to anyone? And so, God allowed their enemies, they Philistines to conquer them. But here’s the thing – sometimes God allows a little pain to come into our lives, but it’s almost always so that He can teach us something. So, after the Israelites had been ruled by the Philistines for a while, God announced that He was going to raise up a leader for Israel to help them regain their freedom – and He announced that to Samson’s mom and dad. And because Samson was going to be so special he was to be a Nazirite from birth.

To be a Nazirite was a special thing in the Old Testament – we don’t have an equivalent in Christianity – but it was like a vow that set you apart to God – maybe like being a monk or nun or a priest today. It’s totally different from being a Nazarene – Jesus was from the city of Nazareth, so they called him a Nazarene – just like someone who lives in the District might be called a Washingtonian – but again, that’s different from being a Nazarene. And one of the signs of your vow was that you didn’t cut your hair – remember that, OK?

Well, as Samson grew up, God began to show Samson what He could do through him.

**Judges 14:6** says that when Samson was out walking one day, he came across a young lion – and he was surprised, just like if you or I were walking down the trail and came across a

snake, but then “the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand.”

Later in life he got into some pretty big fights with the Philistines, the people God wanted to use him to defeat, and one day they came and laid siege to a city near where he was staying but they told the people – look, we don’t all have to fight, there’s no reason for you to die – just arrest Samson and hand him over to us.

Well, the people of Israel told Samson the demands, and he said, “Fine, tie me up and hand me over.” But as they were handing him over, the Philistines all came rushing at him like they were going to attack him, and **Judges 15:14** says, “the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him” he broke the ropes that he had been tied up with, saw the skeleton of a dead donkey laying nearby, grabbed the jawbone and used it as a weapon and took on a thousand men.

And he did all kinds of other crazy things throughout his life *because the Holy Spirit was enabling him.*

But, and pay BIG attention to this - even though God was doing amazing things through him, his heart wasn’t fully surrendered to God. He wandered after his own desires - desires for women in particular. At least three different times Samson got himself in trouble with the ladies, and God was slow to anger, God was merciful and kept giving Samson this supernatural strength, but even the patience of God has limits for those persist in sin and eventually things came to a head – literally.

Read with me in Judges 16:

1 Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. 2 *When the Gazites were told, “Samson has come here!” they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, “In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him.”* 3 And Samson lay low till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put *them* on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

4 Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5 And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Entice him, and find out where his great strength *lies*, and by what *means* we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.”

6 So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength *lies*, and with what you may be bound to afflict you.”

7 And Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.”

8 So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now *men were* lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” But he

broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

10 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with."

11 So he said to her, "If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man."

12 Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" And *men were* lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

13 Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with."

And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom"—

14 So she wove *it* tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom.

15 Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart *is* not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength *lies*." 16 And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, *so* that his soul was vexed to death, 17 that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I *have been* a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man."

18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand.

19 Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

You see, Samson wasn't a super man, he didn't have all this strength and ability on his own – God was working through him, and if God chose to, God could, and did, stop working through him – after intervening so many other times, finally God stopped bailing him out in order to get his attention.

We'll talk more about this another time, but it's something for us to consider – God can be at work in someone's life, even when other areas of their lives are a mess. Just think about the situation back in Corinth – they weren't the poster children for model Christianity, were they? And yet, they were experiencing the Holy Spirit functioning in miraculous ways in their lives and church.

So, what do we make of that? Well, we could approach it from either side.

On the one hand, it ought to sober us. It ought to warn us, that even when God is using us to do great things in ministry, we are still very, very, vulnerable to temptation and we need to stick close to our Savior.

But on the other hand, and especially if we are aware of the need to stick close to Christ, it should encourage us to know that even though we might blow it, God can still use us.

We said last week that we have to make sure that we never mistake God's patience for His permission. None of us truly deserve to have God work in our lives – all of us are blowing it somewhere, on some level, so He doesn't automatically withdraw His influence from our lives when we sin or else none of us would ever be filled with the Holy Spirit. In fact, it's possible to sin radically in one of your life and still be used mightily by God in another area of your life, at least for a while, isn't it?

That's not because God doesn't know what you're doing, it's not because He doesn't think it's a big deal, it's not because He doesn't mind, it's because He's giving you room to repent – again, as we saw last week, it's His kindness that leads to repentance.

God is always willing to give another chance – as we see with Samson -

21 Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.

22 However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.

And I believe that Samson repented and turned back toward God because later, he receive another supernatural enabling and in a final display of strength he brought down the temple of Dagon, the god of the Philistines and proved that God not only forgives, but that He alone is the true God, supremely powerful over anything else that people may worship.

The story of Samson's life has a lot to say to us about the ministry of the Holy Spirit – but he's only one man. Later, the Holy Spirit came upon Israel's kings (Saul: 1 Sam 10:10; 11:16. David: 1 Sam 16:13) and prophets. The Bible tells us the Holy Spirit gave men like Elijah (1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16), Elisha (2 Kings 2:15), and Azariah (2 Chron 15:1) the words to speak, and men like Ezekiel (Ezek 2:2), Daniel (Dan 4:9; 5:1; 6:3) and Micah (Micah 3:8) the words to write.

And then you see Him at work in the life of Jesus. The angel Gabriel explained to both Mary (Lk 1:35) and Joseph (Matt 1:18-20) that the Holy Spirit would come upon Mary and the virgin would conceive. John the Baptist said God told him he would know who the Messiah was when he saw the Holy Spirit descend and remain on that man – and John said that he saw that happen with Jesus (John 1:29-34).

The Bible tells us Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:16; Lk 4:18), sealed by the Holy Spirit (John 6:27), led by the Holy Spirit (Matt 4:1), empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:28), and filled by the Holy Spirit.

And, He promised, that the Holy Spirit was going to continue His ministry to us.

Before He died on Calvary, Jesus told the disciples in the Upper Room:

John 16: 5 “But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. 8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; 11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.

So, what do you say? Has the Holy Spirit convicted you of your sin, and of the need for Christ’s righteousness in your life, have you been convicted of the judgment that is to come? And does He give you assurance that you will avoid that judgment because Christ has been judged in your place, or does He warn you that you are going to face the judgment of a holy God on your own?

The Holy Spirit desires to you guide you into truth – He desires to make Christ glorious in your sight. He wants to tell you the truth about who you are and who Jesus is. But that’s only because He wants to comfort you. He wants you to knock off all the silliness in your life – all the stuff you know you need to stop, or start or change already. He wants to point you to Christ for forgiveness and offer Himself to you for strength – like He offered to the saints of old, like He did with Christ, and like He has done for generations of Christians throughout time.

What do you say? What is your relationship like with Him? We’ve only begun to scratch the surface this morning, but if you would like to know more about the power of the Holy Spirit and the work He wants to do in your life, why don’t you join me in prayer right now.