

XXVIII. The Holy Spirit in Biblical Perspective

Led by the Spirit

“The Gifts of the Holy Spirit”

I Corinthians 12

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

November 13, 2016 – Morning sermon

We are going to look at the entire chapter of I Corinthians 12 but I'd like to start just by reading the opening three verses. I Corinthians 12:1-3 says *[1] Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. [2] You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. [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.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

In the last study we covered being a good steward of what God has entrusted to you and that includes your spiritual gifts. How can you be a good steward of spiritual gifts? All we need to do is look at I Peter 4:7-11 where He tells us that as each one of us has received a spiritual gift then we are to use it for the Lord as good stewards of God's varied graces. In other words, each of us who have been saved by grace have been graced by God with a special gift God has entrusted to us to steward and it is required of stewards to be faithful. So what is a spiritual gift and what does it mean to be a steward of a spiritual gift?

This is my evangelistic moment. If by God's grace you are a believer then that same grace has entrusted to you by the same Spirit a spiritual gift and it is absolutely designed by God and unique. God has entrusted it to you to be used for Him and the common good. You have a spiritual gift. What does the Bible tell us about spiritual gifts? If we were to do a deeper study there are four key texts in the Bible we'd look at but they are not the only ones in the Bible about this subject. I commend them to you for your personal study and we've already looked at one in the last study. That is I Peter 4:7-11. I Peter 4:10-11a says *[10] As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: [11a] whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.* The body of Christ moves forward as we are good stewards of those gifts.

There are three other texts on this as well. One is in Ephesians 4:1-16 on spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. Then there is one in Romans 12 that talks about the spiritual gifts that have been designed and developed by the Holy Spirit and entrusted to us by God's grace. Perhaps the longest and most definitive that we will look at in this study, is I Corinthians 12 that will teach us how to be good stewards of our spiritual gifts.

I Corinthians is written and inspired by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul. It is being written to people located in Corinth which was noted for two things – arrogant pride and sexual immorality of unbelievable proportions. As far as we know Paul ministered to this church on a couple of occasions and one of those times was for 18 months which was one of the longest times he stayed anywhere except for the three year period he spent at the church at Ephesus. Paul had gone away and the arrogance and sexual immorality of the culture had filtered into the church. Deep concerns were written to the Apostle Paul and he received seven questions from them.

When Paul writes to Corinth he starts with this Biblical, Gospel foundation of encouragement in I Corinthians 1 through 4. Then he begins to answer the questions that they have sent to him and we know they have asked him seven questions because his answer to them all begin the same way – “Now, concerning the things you wrote...” We will only look at one of those questions that has to do with spiritual gifts. In I Corinthians 11 they had asked him a question concerning the Lord’s Supper and that was because they had abused it in their arrogance on one another. They had also allowed their ungodliness expressed in immorality to invade even how they did the Lord’s Supper as well as factions in divisiveness, self-exaltation and self-promotion that had crept in. Paul rebukes them and tells them how the Lord’s Supper was meant to be something for the positive instead of the fact that now some were sick and some were dying.

After he addresses the Lord’s Supper with them he wants to talk about how they are to use their spiritual gifts and that was because there were people arrogantly displaying their gifts and demeaning the gifts of others. There were others withdrawing out of intimidation because they didn’t have those greater gifts that were being exploited and exalted. When he finishes explaining this to them he wants to show them a more excellent way and he’ll give us that great chapter on love in I Corinthians 13. The same Spirit who gave you the spiritual gifts gives you the fruit of the Spirit and you’ll know He is working when you love. It is right in this flow that he develops this whole teaching concerning spiritual gifts. We will walk through I Corinthians 12 and then I’ll distill three things for you from this with a takeaway at the end. I think you will find this particularly helpful.

Let’s start by looking at those opening verses that are pretty foundational but highly informative. I Corinthians 12:1-3 says *[1] Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. [2] You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. [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.*

The word ‘uninformed’ used here is where we get the word agnostic from which means to be ignorant and Paul wants them to be equipped concerning spiritual gifts. Paul tells us in verse 2 that before you come to Christ you’ll be a worshipper but instead of true centered worship you will be doing idol worship and whatever the spirit of the age is moving or guiding you will show up in your worship as to what gets your adoration, allegiance and affection but now you have been converted by the grace of God. It is the Spirit of Christ that has led you to Christ which we have been studying all year.

If you are led by the Spirit you are a son of God but if you are not then you don’t belong to Him. You were led to from death to life, from sin to your Savior and now according to the text you ‘can’ say Jesus is Lord. Before you were converted you couldn’t say it because you were dead spiritually so you had no spiritual vocabulary of salvation. Now what you cannot say or will not say is that Jesus is accursed. You may falter and deny Jesus like Peter did, but you will not profane Him by the Spirit.

So let’s put this in context. This is Corinth during the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire let everybody keep the religion they conquered as long as it was in that temple, in that service but they weren’t allowed to bring it out in the public square. In public there was only one religion and it was the state with only one god who was the emperor. So when you met you were under requirement to confess state as supreme and the emperor as divine. You were required to say ‘Caesar is lord.’ The first confession in the New Testament church was ‘Jesus is Lord’ and it

cost the lives of your brothers and sisters. You cannot say 'Jesus is Lord' without the Spirit of God savingly and you cannot curse Him if that same Spirit brought you to Him to confess Him. So Paul says to talk about spiritual gifts we need to talk about what the Spirit has done for you as He brought you from death unto life, gave you the ability to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior and put within you the ability to never curse or profane Him even if the state says 'Caesar is lord' for they would say 'no, Jesus is Lord.' Let's look at what Paul says next.

I Corinthians 12:4-6 says *[4] Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; [5] and there are varieties of service (ministries), but the same Lord; [6] and there are varieties of activities (effects or consequences), but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.* So to illustrate this there is one God and one body of Christ. There are many members in the body of Christ and there are three persons in the Trinity. Every member of the body of Christ has a gift from the one God. The gifts are given by the Holy Spirit. Those gifts were designed to be engaged in ministry and there is one Lord, Jesus, who is over every ministry where those gifts are to be done in the body of Christ, His body. For each one there is an effect that is ordained by God the Father. So God the Spirit's role is to give each member a gift in the one body and those gifts are to be used under the Lordship of Christ and for His glory and God the Father has ordained certain effects that will be given in your life through those gifts.

For instance, there was a man named Dr. Freeman in the church I pastored at in Charlotte, North Carolina. It seems like every time I met him he would tell me that a man who washed his car prayed to receive Jesus or a man who cut his lawn prayed to receive Jesus. Then there was another man in the church who would tell me about all the people he shared Jesus with but couldn't get anyone to pray with him. Both of those men had evangelistic gifts but one was fashioned as a reaper and the other was a cultivator. Then the Father has ordained every effect that is taking place as these men use the gifts the Spirit has given them for the praise and glory of Christ. It is unity of the Trinity with diversity of responsibility – unity in the body of Christ, diversity of gifts, ministry and effects all under our Sovereign God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now Paul gets to the spiritual gifts directly in the next part.

I Corinthians 12:7-11 says *[7] To each is given the manifestation (gift of the Spirit) of the Spirit for the common good. [8] For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, [9] to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, [10] to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. [11] All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

The gift given me was not given for self-gratification or self-promotion but for the common good of the Body of Christ to stay on mission, on message, in ministry. So are all of those gifts present today or have some ceased or if some have ceased, why and how do we move forward? I will answer that in my next study. I want you to see that you have a gift that God gave to you where the Father authored it, the Son oversees it in ministry and the Spirit gave it to you. It is a sovereign gift. You don't pray it up or work it up but you work on it and work it out. You have received the gift that you need that God wants you to have, by grace, by design, by deployment and He will enable you as you stir up the gift and develop it as it grows in working in your life. To get the point across of this unity and diversity Paul then goes back to a wonderful picture of the church, the body of Christ.

I Corinthians 12:12-13 says *[12] For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. [13] For in one*

Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. The baptism of Spirit that puts you in Christ is not a second blessing for some for it is something given to all you receive Christ. This is God's work by His Spirit in all of us and we're all drinking of the same Spirit but as you keep in step with the Spirit He is doing a unique gifting for you in the body of Christ to use for Christ in ministry and in effect ordained by the Father. Now Paul develops it even more.

I Corinthians 12:14-20 says [14] *For the body does not consist of one member but of many.* [15] *If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.* [16] *And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.* [17] *If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?* [18] *But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.* [19] *If all were a single member, where would the body be?* [20] *As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.*

There are some people because of the arrogance of others have said 'my gift doesn't count' and thinks the only gift that counts is that one. Paul is telling them that is not right for if we were all an eye there would be no smell or hearing or walking or touching or speaking. God has given all of these gifts and you can't think that yours isn't important and necessary for there are no little people or little gifts in the body of Christ. Everyone is dependent upon the other.

My wife did a needle point one time trying to encourage me. It had the scripture on it from Romans 10:13-17 which says [13] *For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* [14] *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?* [15] *And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"* [16] *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"* [17] *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

This is a passage on preaching and my wife was trying to encourage me in my ministry. Every time we look at that needle point we laugh particularly because of verse 15. I do not have beautiful feet and I don't own a pair of sandals because I don't wear them. I have the ugliest feet that God ever decided to make in this world and one in particular has a problem with one toe. I spent some time on a heating pad this week due to my jogging but my doctor told me that I didn't really have a bad back. He told me I had a bad knee that came from a bad toe. In other words, I was compensating for my foot that caused the knee problem that then caused my back problem.

Many of us in the church think we have a back problem in the church but really it is because there are some feet that don't show up. That's a problem and we're trying to adjust and accommodate. One of the reasons they may not be showing up is because they may not think they are important. Our knee can't function without you. Our backs won't be right without you. Then we can't move without you. Every single part is important. One can't say in nonhumble, arrogant, self-deprecation that if they can't be a certain gift then they won't show up because they don't think they are important. Then there is the arrogance of those who would introduce that notion of certain gifts not being important into the body of Christ which is not right either. Let's continue in the passage.

I Corinthians 12:21-26 says [21] *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] *On the contrary, the parts of*

the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, [23] and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, [24] which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, [25] that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. [26] If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

So when every member shows up we all rejoice because now we're functioning. If one doesn't show up or is absent or discarded or is not valued then the body of Christ begins to suffer because all are needed for us to stay on mission, on message and in ministry. We are all gifted and called to worship but we have some people gifted in worship that help us worship. We are all called and gifted to evangelize but there are some that are gifted in evangelism that can set the pace for us. We are all called to pray in faith but we have some who have the gift of faith and prayer. We are all called to love one another but we have some with a particular gift of hospitality that sets the table in love for one another in ways that encourage us that others don't have. We are all called to disciple and be disciplined but there are some who are gifted in discipleship. We are all called to teach one another but there are some gifted in teaching. We are all called to proclaim the Gospel but there are some who are gifted to preach within in the body of Christ. Every part is important. Paul drives a stake in both false pride and arrogance where spiritual gifts are concerned in the body of Christ.

There was a man who did an interview with Billy Graham years ago after God had blessed his crusade in Pittsburg. The interviewer said "God has really blessed these Crusades in city after city but what is the functional key, besides the Gospel, that is behind all this?" The interviewer thought he might say something like 'knowing how to do the invitation, or the choir or the music by Cliff Barrows' or something like that. Billy said "That's easy for there is lady that has been commissioned by a church with the Crusade schedule where she goes a week ahead of the Crusade to the hotel room and prays the entire time for the Crusade that coming week. Then while the Crusade is going on she comes and prays at the stadium for what is going on. Afterward she goes to all the churches who are following up on that Crusade and prays with them for the follow up on the Crusade. That is the person you need to go visit." No one would have known her.

We are the body of Christ and God allows us to get fascinated with it so we will honor it but in reality we get over fascinated with it to the dishonor of what is actually more important. The visible becomes more important than the invisible. In your own body is that not true? What is more important, your eye lashes or your liver? This morning you when you got up to get ready you looked in the mirror. How many of you stopped in front of that mirror and wondered how your kidneys were doing? If you hair falls out you can live but if your kidney falls out then you're done. It's those invisible gifts that are so crucial in the body of Christ. Here is the last part of the text.

I Corinthians 12:27-31 says [27] Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. [28] And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. [29] Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? [30] Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? [31] But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

So here is my outline from this passage and what it teaches us. One is the indispensable gift for life from Christ. Jesus Christ is the Life giving Spirit. In other words,

Jesus rose to give us the Indispensable gift of the Spirit. Without Him you cannot say 'Jesus is Lord' and without Him you will not be faithful to the Lord.

The second thing we learned from this text is the indescribable gift of life in Christ, is Christ. The Holy Spirit brings you to Christ and it's Christ who gives you life eternal. The Holy Spirit brings you from death unto life and that life is Christ, the indescribable gift.

Thirdly, is the intentional gifts in life for Christ which are your spiritual gifts and there are three things about these gifts. They are unique and no one has a gift like yours. When snow falls you see the snowflakes but each snowflake upon observation is unique. We are all gifted and many times they look similar but in reality every single one of you are unique and nobody is like your gift. Your place is important in the body of Christ. Secondly, they are interdependent. You are to function in context with the body of Christ, not out on your own. So we are to function as members of the body for the common good as we have been uniquely gifted by God in His sovereign appointment, which is the third aspect of our gifts. He has sovereignly designed and deployed you with your gift in the body of Christ to be a good steward of it and to bear in the body of Christ.

So the takeaway is all who have been led by the Spirit to Christ for life are led by the same Spirit with spiritual gifts to serve Christ as a unique and connected member of the body of Christ – His Church. I am going to be pointed here and explain two things to you. The church of Jesus Christ does not exist to be a platform for any gift to be lifted up above other gifts. That is not why the church is here. Briarwood doesn't exist to give me a job or for my gift. My gifts have been given for Briarwood. Spiritual gifts are not physical talents.

I loved the way the graduates and career ministry at Christ Church in Charlotte used their gifts for the body of Christ. Several of the young men had amazing gifts with their hands. Once a quarter they had a Saturday for widows, single moms and single women to bring their cars to get them serviced by these young men. If there was something they couldn't fix they would refer them to a list of Christian mechanics they knew and trusted. Now fixing cars is not a spiritual gift but these guys were mechanically minded. They helped but their gift was mercy. A spiritual gift is not a personality package either. When the women would come back for their car, it would be ready with a note in it and a rose on the seat. It was amazing how many marriages came out of that ministry.

The founding pastor this church has the gift of pastor, preacher and teacher and I have the gift of pastor, preacher and teacher but we have two different personality packages. The personality is the delivery system to those gifts but not the gifts. Gifts are not physical talents for those are enhancements. They are spiritual gifts that God has uniquely given you to be fastened and demonstrated in the body of Christ. I want you to see that our gifts are connected to the body of Christ.

The body of Christ does not exist to be a platform to exalt our gifts nor is our gift going to be fully used if we try to use it apart from the body of Christ. If church is something that just fits into your schedule as you would a drive through then your gifts are not being stewarded. It doesn't matter what organization you started although I thank God for every organization but your spiritual gifts were made to function in the body of Christ, His Church. I am not being a good steward if I'm not in a robust connected relationship with the covenant community stewarding my gift in the body of Christ. I exist for the common good for that body to function to the glory of God. That is why God has gifted me and called me. If you don't show up the job will get done because Jesus is greater than any of us.

When I was a kid my mother would give me fifty cents every Saturday to go to the movies. It was ten cents round trip on the number two bus. It was twenty five cents to get into the movie. It was fifteen cents for me to get milk duds and an orange drink. Then with the last five cents I'd get a pea shooter using it to hit people at the stop sign from the open window of the bus on the way home. I'm just confessing but when I would walk from my mom's job to the theater there would be a burger place where I man would sit out in front with no legs.

He had made for himself a leather saddle for his lower extremities and as he played his harmonica people who walked by would drop coins in his hat that was sitting near him. One time I saw someone throw a quarter absent-mindedly his way but missed his hat. He laid down his harmonica, picked up two blocks of wood he placed his hands on and pushed himself up to walk on his fists to get the quarter. He put the quarter in his hat and then started playing again. He got the job done but I'm sure if you asked him if he would rather have those blocks of wood to walk with or two legs I'm sure he would have said two legs.

That is what is happening in the body of Christ. In our individualism we are disconnected from the body of Christ and not stewards of our gifts and therefore we have many who are arms that are having to take the place of those who are legs. We're going to get the job done because we're going to put our trust in Jesus but what if the whole body came together with all of their gifts, not exalting themselves or demeaning themselves, with no jealousy or envy or pride or arrogance but good stewards for the common good to stay on message and in ministry with worship, evangelism, loving and discipleship? What would happen with good stewards of God's varied graces? Let's pray.

Prayer:

Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. If the Holy Spirit (the Indispensable gift) has worked in your heart to come to Jesus (the Indescribable gift) for eternal life or if you want to pray through how you can use your spiritual gifts then please contact us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. We'd be happy to talk with you and pray with you. God, please be at work in our lives. You have not only done much by grace to save us but You've done much to equip us to tell people about the Savior as the body of Christ to seek and to save the lost. Would You allow each one of us to be good stewards, never thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought nor thinking in false humility that we're not important for You have designed us sovereignly. You have uniquely gifted us. Our gifts are not static. They are dynamic and growing. We don't go into ministry but we grow into ministry. Help us to be good stewards, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

AN OVERVIEW

I. The Indispensable Gift for Life from Christ

II. The Indescribable Gift of Life in Christ

III. The Intentional Gifts in Life for Christ

- Unique
- Interdependent
- Sovereignly designed and deployed

LIFE TAKEAWAY

All who have been led by the Spirit to Christ for life are led by the same Spirit, with spiritual gifts to serve Christ as a unique and connected member of the Body of Christ—His Church.