

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Intro: Paul now moves onto the next topic that the church had written to him about with the words **Now concerning**. That topic is the topic of spiritual gifts.

--A few things need to be said by way of introduction because of how the reality of spiritual gifts and the work of the Holy Spirit is seen in the Church. In most cases the sentiment is either people who are crazy all-in on spiritual gifts (Continuationists: Bethel + Pentecostals + Charismatics + Abuses) or stodgy all-out on spiritual gifts (Cessationists: Reformed and Baptist backgrounds).

--The reality is that there is a whole lot of the Church that is in the middle which is likely the best place to be. Calvary Chapel tries to take that balanced position—Pentecostals think we are Baptists and Baptists think we are Pentecostals!

--First, I must clearly state that we believe the gifts of the Spirit are still for the Church today and are in operation as the Holy Spirit is pleased to give, distribute, and manifest.

--Second, it is clear from the Word of God that there is not a single verse in the Bible that even hints at a limiting of Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit and His work in the church.

John 14:16-18: *And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—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. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.*

Acts 1:4-5: *And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized you with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

Acts 2:33+38-39: *Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. . . Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*

--The promise of the Holy Spirit is the unique promise of our day and age! It is not the promise of spiritual gifts but the promise of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts are *one* benefit of the Holy Spirit. I don't know how theologians don't see that to limit one portion of the work of the Holy Spirit is to limit Christ's promise and open the door to limit *all* the other works of the Holy Spirit.

--We cannot limit the Spirit's work in: Convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; Regeneration; Spiritual Revelation; Adoption; Assurance; Restraining; Graces; etc.

--Why do godly men and women feel the need do this? Where does the teaching behind Cessationism come from if not from Scripture? It comes from two places—Bad experience and No experience. Abuses and Questions!

--Bad Experience of Abuses:

--I could list a thousand terrible and ungodly things done in the name of the Holy Spirit but it is unnecessary. We are all too familiar with them. Abuses are real.

--That said, the whole point of this section of 1 Corinthians is to help us see that the abuse of spiritual gifts does not negate the reality of spiritual gifts. Paul instructs. He does not cancel. All truths and practices that relate to spiritual gifts are still under the authority of the Word of God.

That being said, I wish that more Christians feared sin the way they fear the Holy Spirit!

--No Experience or Questions:

--There are many—like John Calvin—who come to the Cessationist position because they do not see the gifts operating like they did in that early church. They ask a good question: Why don't we see the Holy Spirit working like He did in the Gospels and the Book of Acts? **Take note, that is a great question but not a Biblical argument from Scripture for the limiting of the work of the Holy Spirit.**

--I am going to give you three answers to this good question:

1) Because the early church was centralized and the worldwide church is decentralized. Obviously, you had all the apostles in one city at one time! So too, the work of God was centralized literally in a city—Jerusalem.

--Then as the work of God spread across the world we *heard* less of what God was doing but that doesn't mean that God was *doing* less.

--The promise of the miraculous (not the Holy Spirit as a whole but His particular miraculous works) was primarily a *frontline* promise.

****Mark 16:19-20: So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preach everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.****

--Where do we still hear of the miraculous most often today? On the frontline territory of those who are witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—both foreign or domestic.

2) Because of our lack of faith and our lack of fidelity to God.

****James 4:3: You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.****

--Even in the Book of Acts we see many who didn't know about the promise of the Holy Spirit. And they did not receive the filling of the Holy Spirit until they asked in faith. Those early saints who saw the resurrected Christ, heard Him promise they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and then had tongues of fire on their heads, didn't need convincing that the Holy Spirit was there for them in supernatural power to be witnesses.

--Unfortunately, it is the opposite for most believers today. Large portions of the Church in our world don't believe this or don't know this!

--Or, they only want some spiritual gift for their own promotion and God refuses to give supernatural witnesses to the exaltation of the flesh. How many today could God trust with the publicity such miracles brought to Peter or John or Paul?

3) Because we misunderstand the operation and purpose of the Holy Spirit in spiritual gifts.

--Because of bad teaching and false expectations, people misunderstand what they should be looking for.

--Even in the Book of Acts we don't see miracles continuing in the same way once the church was established like in Jerusalem or Antioch. Also, we don't see Paul or Peter healing or doing miracles however and whenever they wanted. That wasn't how those gifts operated because it wasn't how the Holy Spirit operates.

Verse 1:

--Now Paul is moving into this topic where he doesn't at all need to argue like I just did about the reality of the Holy Spirit's gifts.

--The English word *gifts* is not really in there. The Greek word is *pneumatikos* and can refer to spiritual people or spiritual things based on the context. You can say Paul is saying, okay, now concerning *matters of the Spirit*.

Verses 2-3:

--Before Paul gets into particulars, he puts their present experience in contrast with their past experience (does this in other places such as **Eph. 2:11-12**). Their previous life of being led by **dumb idols** was *why* they needed instruction. They had no experience in the life of godliness or spiritual matters.

--This is not to figure out if believers are in the Spirit but if people have the Holy Spirit *at all!* All other spiritual works begin with that of regeneration. This is what people who have the Spirit say of Jesus.

Romans 8:9: But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

--This is also what people who don't have the Spirit don't say of Jesus! They cannot say **Jesus is Lord**. The Greek word here is *kyrios* which acknowledges Jesus as deity and invested with full authority.

--Of course people can fake—and do fake—the words but they cannot fake the reality! *There are so many people that want Jesus to be a *part* of their life, want Jesus to be there to *help* their life, want Jesus to *give* them life, but don't want Jesus to *rule* as Lord of their life or have their life be *for* Jesus!*

--So before any of us begin to worry about our spiritual gifts we should first be able to answer a

simple question: Is Jesus the Lord of our whole life? Would it be weird or awkward for your wife, or children, or coworkers, or friends to have you look at them and say: *Jesus is the Lord of every aspect of my life*? If you cannot do so in good conscience, repent and worry about spiritual gifts once you can do so.

Verses 4-6:

--Now Paul gets into more of the specifics of spiritual gifts. The word **gifts** in the Greek is *charisma* and is *often* but not *only* related to spiritual gifts in the Bible. In fact, it refers to all the gifts of God's grace and even to the gift of salvation as in **Romans 5:15-16 + 6:23**.

--So it is not quite the technical term that some make it out to be but it does mean that we are all charismatics!

--Here, we see Paul's main point in speaking of their spiritual gifts is to show that the unity and diversity of God is reflected in the church's expression of spiritual gifts.

--The word for **diversities** is the same in verses **4-6** and is used only here in Scripture—though another form of it is used in verse **11**. Making the emphasis of Paul's point clear.

--Paul wants this church—that is overemphasizing the particular gift of tongues—to see that there is a wide diversity of gifts and operations but a unity of source of purpose behind them.

--The language Paul uses here reflects the Trinity but I don't think he is being exclusive as much as he is just trying to be fitting. The Spirit does give gifts. The Lord does call us to service. God does will and energize our works. But Paul it is not saying that each member of the Trinity *only* plays that particular role. He is making the point that God is behind everything happening.

--The work of the Holy Spirit in the Church across the world is incredibly diverse but it is all a symphony directed by one divine will, heart, and hand.

--This means that we really cannot get too specified about *how* specific spiritual gifts are and are not to work. There is a wide variety and God made it that way on purpose! *Just think of evangelism, pastor-teacher, hospitality or giving, etc. Just think of the different ways the Holy Spirit has worked through men and women in the Bible!*

--There is a God-given and God-glorifying type of individuality that is reflected in the operation of spiritual gifts **but it is the same God who works all in all**.

--There are seven colors in the rainbow. They can be combined and blended in thousands of ways to create countless shades of other colors. So God, working through man by His Spirit, blends the use of body, mind, and spirit—physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual qualities—with the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit to display His own work in infinite forms and energies and numbers.

*Boreham (The Passing of John Broadbanks): *"That is a great secret. If I possess wealth, I possess it in common with all the wealthy. If I possess strength, I possess it in common with all the strong. But I possess individuality; and, in possessing individuality, I possess something that is absolutely unique. When God makes a man, he breaks the mould. There are no duplicates, and it is in our folly that we attempt to create them. Mimics are always monstrosities."**

--We each possess a spark of divine life, character, beauty, and favor that distinguishes you from every other person that has been or that will be. God made it that way because you are a part of His image and likeness and He is infinitely unique. That spark of individual life gives a particular odor that pleases God and should attract us as well.

--Sadly, sin does the opposite! It turns men into similar animals, zombies, or monsters!

Verse 7:

--Paul tells us three very important things about spiritual gifts in this verse:

--First, the Spirit who lives in each of us shows Himself in different ways through each person. That should be *manifest* in our lives. **Manifestation** is not a word we use but it simply means a disclosure of the Spirit's work.

--You may not know what your "gifts" are but is there any evident work of the Holy Spirit in your life? God would have it to be so! It may be humble but it should be evident that it is supernatural and not natural. *Oh how often we turn to methods of men when we should be seeking the promise of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit!*

--Second, this is for **each one**. There is no opting out of the course here!

--Everyone is to be making some contribution to the whole. God has designed it that way. It is not a matter of *personal* importance but of the importance of the *purpose*. The value of my contribution is related to the *whole* of what is happening. The kingdom of God! I am pitching in to the only everlasting thing happening on the face of the earth.

--Third, the work of the Holy Spirit in my life is **for the profit of all**. I was not born—or born again—for myself. I will never find my gifts or be able to exercise my gifts living for myself, thinking about myself, or trying to glorify myself. They are meant to bless others!

1 Peter 4:10: As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

--It is utter foolishness to try to find my place in God's work in relation to myself. I am called to live my life in relation to God first and others second. *Dumb spiritual gift questionnaires!*

--Being a pastor-teacher is my way to love God and love others. The way I discovered that was simply by going to church and seeking to love God and love others.

Verses 8-10:

--Here again, Paul is making the point of diversity and unity in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. His point is not to lay out an exhaustive list of all the spiritual gifts. That type of specification would literally be opposed to the point he is making.

--There are various lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible (**Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:28-30; Eph. 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11**) and all of them are meant to be descriptive and not exhaustive.

--I don't think we can get too specific about any of these gifts—particularly their direct operations—or even the order they are in. Many commentators try to systematize the list in relation but there always seems to be some part of the formula that breaks down.

--The most notable portion of the list is that Tongues are typically mentioned last. I don't think that is in relation to importance but is an evidence of the fact that Paul has to correct the Corinthians *overemphasis* of the gift. Which is also part of the argument that Paul is making in showing the diversity and unity of all gifts in by the work of the Spirit.

--(8) The **word of wisdom** and the **word of knowledge** definitely seem similar.

--**Word of wisdom:** No doubt, wisdom must be in relation to what Paul has already said about the spiritual wisdom of God earlier in this epistle. This would relate to how God is working the world that can only be known spiritually and not by the natural man.

--I guess you could say a word of wisdom is the conclusion derived from spiritual perception.

--**Word of knowledge:** is likely unknown information or information in relation to teaching.

Maybe some well known Christian authors would even fit into this such as Athanasius or Augustine or C.S. Lewis and that is part of the reason why their material has lasted for years or hundreds of years.

--(9) **Faith:** Obviously this is not saving faith but a special gift of faith to live and serve God.

Think of Hebrews 11 and also those like George Mueller, G.D. Watson, or even our more modern friend Paul Stege!

--**Healings:** Certainly, this is quite a controversial one. I would make the point that the word **healings** is in the plural through the whole chapter (28-29). This should inform our idea of the gift. It is not a *gift* of healing given to one person to act out at will—and it wasn't for anyone in the OT or NT! It is *gifts of healings* given at the will of the Holy Spirit as He sees fit.

--We can ask but cannot demand or control.

--(10) **Miracles:** This has the idea of supernatural power and acts: Walking on water; Feeding the five thousand; Philip being taken; Peter or Paul raising the dead; etc.

--**Prophecy:** This is both insight and foresight. The present message or the future message from God for His people. *It wasn't always doom and gloom!*

--**Discerning of spirits:** I believe this was purposefully connected to prophecy as interpretation of tongues follows the gifts of tongues. We know that there were already many false prophets in the world at this very time! So we have numerous Biblical warnings to test those who claim to be speaking for God: **14:19; 1 Thess. 5:20-21; 1 John 4:1.**

--Would to God that He poured out a holy and supernatural spirit of discernment on His church today!

--**Tongues:** We will get more into this later. The gift of tongues was promised by Christ in **Mark 16:17**; happened at Pentecost in **Acts 2:4**; and continued to the Gentiles and so forth as we see in **Acts 10:6 + 19:6.**

--The gift of tongues *manifested* the work of the Holy Spirit in a unique way. It manifested the promise of Christ to His disciples. It manifested the Gospel to the Gentiles and the gift of the Holy Spirit to them as well. It also brought spiritual publicity to the message of the Old Testament and the Apostles. It built up individual believers in Christ.

--**Interpretation:** Is just that. The speaker does not know what they are saying as don't most of the listeners. So interpretation is needed if the Holy Spirit would use the gift of tongues to minister to listeners.

Verse 11:

--Here again, like verse **7**, Paul gives us three very important principles about spiritual gifts.

--First, the Holy Spirit is the one working behind all spiritual gifts. This means that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are *never* in conflict. If people are talking about "conflicting" spiritual gifts they are in the flesh and not in the Spirit!

--Second, the Holy Spirit is the one that does the **distributing to each one individually**. The Holy Spirit gives gifts independent of all human authority. No human authority, no church body, no university or man-made institution can impart a single spiritual gift or authority.

--Men can recognize gifts but they cannot impart them. Calvary Chapel rejects all human claim to spiritual life apart from the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in real life.

--I think this is an understated point. This means that no one can stop me from living out the life of God in me. No natural cause can keep me from exercising a supernatural gift. The only reason your gift is buried is because you buried it. *Moses, Elijah, Paul, etc.*

*Tozer (We Travel An Appointed Way): *"To each of us God has issued a certain store as it has pleased Him: to one more, to another less. And since God owes us nothing, anything He gives to us may be put down to His unearned generosity. The man with a smaller store dare not complain against God for having given him less than his neighbor received. God's gifts are not debts which He pays us, but gratuities bestowed out of pure mercy.*

One thing taught in the Holy Scriptures is that while God gives His gifts freely, He will require a strict accounting of them at the end of the road. Each man is personally responsible for his store, be it large or small, and will be required to explain his use of it before the judgment seat of Christ."

--Third, and finally, the Holy Spirit does all this **as He wills!**

--The gifts that come to me come at His will not mine. Men can decide to become a teacher or plumber or nurse or accountant but they must *ask* for spiritual gifts.

--This takes all the reality out of our hands and puts it back into His hands. Gordon Fee in his commentary calls this verse the Pauline version of **John 3:8**.

--The point being: However wrong we get this issue of spiritual gifts, the Holy Spirit will do just as He pleases!