

“Gifts of the Spirit!”

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

May 10, 2015

www.WORDFORLIFESAYS.com

(Please Note: All lesson verses and titles are based on International Sunday School Lesson/Uniform Series ©2010 by the Lesson Committee, but all content/commentary written within is original to wordforlifesays.com unless properly quoted/cited)

Introduction:

Any spiritual gift one receives from God is not for their personal benefit. Rather, the gifts He has placed inside each of us is for the building up of His church; for the edifying of His people.

1 Peter 4:10-11 says, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion ever and ever. Amen.” Any gift given is for the purpose to “minister,” or serve “one to another” with the end result “that God in all things may be glorified.”

In our lesson, as with other issues that Paul has dealt with concerning the church at Corinth, division and confusion has reared its head also over the topic of spiritual gifts. Paul seeks to rectify the situation in writing this letter to explain to the church the different varieties of gifts, the value of all gifts given, and their intended purpose which was for the benefit of all.

In 1 Corinthians 14:12 Paul says, “Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.” Plain and simple, gifts are to be “other’s centered.”

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

1) “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

2) Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

3) Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”

The Apostle Paul spent a significant portion of this first letter to the Corinthian Church in dealing with instructions and use of “**spiritual gifts.**” Why was this so important to him? Because, like many of the others issues the church at Corinth faced (which preacher they preferred to follow, the Lord’s Supper, foods offered to idols, Christian freedom, etc.) this church also let the endowment of “**spiritual gifts**” bring division between its members.

From the onset of this letter Paul addresses their divisive spirit toward one another saying, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be *no divisions among you*; but that ye *be perfectly joined together in the same mind* and in the same judgment,” (1 Corinthians 1:10, emphasis mine).

Note: Division had become their spiritual enemy. Evil looks for vulnerabilities and attacks in areas of weakness to bring down its prey. For the Corinthian church, staying spiritually whole and working together had become a real area of weakness for them. Dealing with divisive spirits became a snare to their spiritual growth.

Division of any sort in the church is such a deadly thing. That’s why it has to be continually dealt with. In Romans 16:17 Paul taught, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” When you “avoid” them, you “avoid” the division they seek to bring (see also 2 Timothy 2:23 and Titus 3:9-10).

Even Jesus taught, “And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand,” (Mark 3:25). Division takes away support. Once the support of any

structure or organization is diminished it no longer has the strength to stand. It will crumble.

Paul had to deal with this problem immediately. The church needed to be built up using one another's gifts, not torn down.

Here, he addresses the divisiveness that has come as a result over the confusion and purpose of **"spiritual gifts."** Because of this, Paul did not want them to remain **"ignorant."** He wanted to fully disclose and teach them the proper use of these abilities that God has endowed them with.

First, he speaks to them of their previous spiritual state. They were, **"Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led."** In the past, before their lives were changed by Christ, they followed after idols and the evil, spiritual forces behind them, as did we. We all have a past behind us; a story to tell before we came to Christ.

That's what they used to do and be, but they don't live in the past anymore. Now, they are in Christ. They have to nurture and care for their spiritual state in the here and now. Part of that is realizing their true identity in Christ and His true identity to this world.

Apparently, some have come to disparage His holy name; to try to deceive and take away from the power of the salvation He offered on the cross. Yet, Paul sets the people in the Corinthian church straight about the truth of listening to those who declare something other than what they have already been taught. As a spiritual father over this church, Paul wanted to protect them from lies that bring divisiveness and could hurt them spiritually in the future.

Note: A Christian always has to be on guard to what and whom they are listening to. False teachers are always on the prowl. Their goal is to deceive and draw away from the truth any and all who will hear them.

As John battled with this enemy of deception in our previous lesson: "Warning! Warning!" so does Paul in dealing with the Corinthian church. In 2 John 1:7 we

read, “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

Since Paul is specifically dealing with the topic of some calling **“Jesus accursed,”** we can only assume that he was combatting directly this negative false teaching in his quest to set them on the right path of instruction.

With those instructions he told them how to measure the true from the false when it comes to someone who is “preaching” Jesus. First, he says, **“No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed.”** There is complete unity in the Trinity; complete oneness between God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. One will never contradict the other; one will never speak a negative or against truth of the other. Therefore, if an individual or teacher comes along and speaks against the truth already established in the gospels, in His right Word, then they are not of God; they are not of truth. One should avoid listening to them.

At the same time, as a double marker of truth, Paul teaches the church at Corinth **“that no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”** The **“Holy Ghost”** will only speak those things of God and support the eternal reign and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

For example, when Peter got up on the day of Pentecost and preached, after being filled with the power of the **“Holy Ghost”** (Acts 2:4), he declared to the gathered audience, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same *Jesus*, whom you crucified, both **Lord and Christ,**” (Acts 2:36, emphasis mine). Filled with the **“Spirit”** he verified **“that Jesus is Lord.”**

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

4) “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5) And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6) And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.”

“Gifts, administrations, and operations” are all referring to ways of working one’s spiritually endowed skills and abilities for Him by **“the same Spirit . . . the same Lord . . . the same God.”**

Did you catch that unity in the midst of the workings? It doesn’t matter what one does for the Lord everybody is important and every gift is important. Not only are they important but they are all from Him: **“the same Spirit . . . the same Lord . . . the same God.”**

The authorship of each spiritual gift comes from the **“same”** heavenly resource: Him; God! **“Same”** gives the idea of oneness. It really exemplifies there is no difference. There is no division. There is no separation. “There is one body, and on Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all,” (Ephesians 4:4-6). ONE!

Therefore, it doesn’t matter the gift that one is given and works. It all comes from One and is working together to glorify that One and to help the church as a whole. “Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that,” (1 Corinthians 7:7).

Don’t focus on whose gift is greatest. Just work what God gave you. Don’t push your gift aside because you are so focused on another’s gift. Paul told Timothy, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee . . .” (1 Timothy 4:14). You and I have been anointed and appointed to work where God needs us. Use your gifts for Him and to help others.

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God,” (1 Peter 4:10); as seen below in our next portion of our lesson.

1 Corinthians 12:7 “But the manifestation of the Spirit it is given to every man to profit withal.”

The way the **“Spirit”** manifest or reveals His workings through individual’s gifts are to **“profit withal;”** they are for the benefit of everyone, not just one’s self.

The advancement of God's business and the church as a whole should benefit from what He has blessed inside of you; not just you.

God has blessed you and me to make a difference in other's lives. He has some special stuff on the inside of each of us that is never meant to be buried, hidden, or kept to and for ourselves. Don't go through life without the world benefiting from the treasure that God has placed in you. Unearth it and put it out there for all to partake of. That's what He gave it to you for! To lift up the body of Christ (see Ephesians 4:12), not to divide it.

Note: Think about the word division and how we use it in terms of math. It's just a glorified way to say we are taking away from; of dividing or splitting up a whole into many sections. When a whole is divided it then becomes the opposite of what it originally was. Instead of one strong force it becomes many little ones. While this may be beneficial in assuring that everyone gets an even amount of pie for an after dinner treat, when one does this in an organization such as a church, it can birth dissensions, competitions and the like. Each would be more concerned and focused with his/her section, losing sight of the bigger picture of being beneficial to the whole.

They were losing sight that they are members of a greater whole and everything they say and do is to be for the purpose of the whole.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

8) "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

9) To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

10) To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

11) But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Here again, we see a reiteration of the foundation truth of this lesson: **“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”** All gifts, no matter the office and no matter the workings, have their origin in Him and He gives them out **“as he will.”**

Paul lists some of the **“Spirit’s”** workings:

- **“The word of wisdom . . . the word of knowledge”** – Both seem to imply dealing with and explaining God’s word thoroughly to one’s hearers; one able to operate with understanding and articulate it clearly to others. In Ecclesiastes 9:16 it states that “wisdom is better than strength” and in verse 18 it states that “wisdom is better than weapons of war.” Therefore, ones gifted in wisdom and how to apply that wisdom through knowledge is necessary for growth of any healthy church for they are to be more dependent on God and what He says as a resource than any other thing.
- **“Faith”** – Believing that God can do more. Faith opens the door of possibilities (see Matthew 17:19-20) that would normally be shut. Faith causes people to step out into the unknown and believe God for the things they can’t yet see. Hebrews 11 is full of people who had extraordinary faith that went above and beyond their human companions. Their **“faith”** made history and allowed God to work to perform greatness where human perceptions said it should not be so.
- **“Healing”** – God has gifted some to heal; to bring cures to the incurables. Many during the Bible era were afflicted with different maladies that without intervention would shorten one’s life or prevent them from enjoying it to the fullest. This not only made the lame walk and brought sight to the blind; it not only cast out devils and restored health, but it gave testimony to the power of God working in those who proclaimed His truth.
- **“Miracles”** – Worked much like healing in that they verified the authenticity of the speakers. For Jesus they “manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him,” (John 2:11; see also John 10:22-39; 20:30-31). God confirms and bears witness to His people through miracles (see Hebrews 2:4).

What does a miracle look like? It looks like the impossible coming to pass. For example, specifically dealing with Paul's ministry, handkerchiefs were brought to the sick from him and diseases and evil spirits left (Acts 19:11:12).

In other areas of the Bible it looks like a hundred year old man being blessed with a son in his old age (Gen. 21:2); it looks like the Red Sea parting to give safe passage for God's people to pass on dry land (Ex. 14:21-31); it looks like the meal and oil that didn't run out for the widow (1 Kings 17:14-16); it looks like Lazarus being raised from the dead (Jn. 11:38-44); it looks like fire coming down from heaven for Elijah (2 Kings 1:10); and it looks like 5,000 being fed from five loaves of bread and two fish (Mt. 14:15-21) just to name a few.

- **“Prophecy”** – One who not only predicts the future but is also a mouthpiece of God to share what thus saith the Lord.
- **“Discerning of spirits”** – A necessary gift to the truth in a world filled with untruths. Those who can rightly distinguish the true from the false to help us from being “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive,” (Ephesians 4:14).
- **“Divers kinds of tongues”** – Jesus once said to him that “believeth and is baptized,” (Mark 16:16, KJV), that these signs will follow them. One of those signs is “they shall speak with new tongues,” (Mark 16:17, KJV).

Speaking in tongues on the day of Pentecost was because the “Spirit gave them utterance.” They didn't do this themselves but God's Spirit loosened their tongues to flow in those languages they had not previously learned (Acts 2:6-8). Other occurrences and references to “speaking in tongues” are found in Acts 10:46 & 19:6. It's also listed as a gift in 1 Corinthians 14:5.

“Tongues,” Paul once taught, also operated as a sign to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22). Paul believed in speaking in tongues to the point of testifying, “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all” (1

Corinthians 14:18 - shock face!). In this area of speaking in tongues, which the Corinthian Church seemed to be zealous for in chapter 14, Paul's exclamation is, "I out do all of you!"

- **"The interpretation of tongues"** - If one is speaking strictly in tongues, without interpretation, it leaves people for a loop on how to properly respond to what is being said.

If I were to go to a foreign land on a trip without being fluent in the local language, I could not ask for help or properly respond to questions or statements directed toward me. If I can't properly understand what is being said, how can I properly respond?

A simple sentence on how to order food, find directions, or yes, even a local restroom understood would do me a lot more good than trying to hear somebody rattle on and converse on and on and I have not a clue what they are saying. The same principle applies here.

1 Corinthians 14:13 supports interpretation by saying, "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret." People need to understand what is being said. When it comes to the church, not on a personal level, Paul wants everyone in the building to benefit. All should be able to reap from the good of that gift.

When the Word is properly communicated in the church amongst the believing, it can make a positive impact in the lives of all the hearers. The more it is understood the more help it can be to convict of sins and build up faith and lives. Properly represented, God's clear Word expressed can do more than a whole church speaking in languages, without interpretation, that can't be understood.

Conclusion:

God has blessed us with spiritual gifts. Use them to bless others.

