

UNITY IN DIVERSITY / Sunday, May 10, 2015

Unifying Topic: GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Lesson Text

I. United By Our Confession (1 Corinthians 12:1-3)

II. United In Service (1 Corinthians 12: 4-7)

III. United In The Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

The Main Thought: But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal (1 Corinthians 12:7, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Most humans seek opportunities to become loyal contributing members of their societies. What motivates and empowers them to work together? Paul says that because one person does not possess all of the spiritual gifts, believers must work together for the church's common good.

Lesson Aim: To learn that God gives each person spiritual gifts in order to help the church grow.

Life Aim: To learn to uncover the spiritual gifts of the faith community and the ways they can be used for its benefit.

HISTORY:

¹The Corinthian church was facing several problems that were about to rip the church apart. One of the most serious problems was the issue of spiritual gifts. No gift, no ability, no endowment from God should ever be abused or cause a controversy. But the gifts of God's Spirit were being so abused by the Corinthian believers that the church was about to be torn apart. Note how critical the issue was: Paul devotes three whole chapters to the question of spiritual gifts. A quick look at the history of spiritual gifts will help in understanding this passage.

1. The Old Testament had foretold that God would send His Spirit to earth and gift His people in a special way. *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit"* Joel 2:28-29.
2. Jesus Christ had promised and discussed the Holy Spirit with His followers in great detail:
 - The Person of the Holy Spirit or who the Holy Spirit is (Jh.14:15-26).
 - The work of the Holy Spirit (Jh.16:7-15).
 - The very special signs and protection that the Holy Spirit would provide for them.
 - *"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover"* Mk.16:17-18.
 - The promise of the Spirit's permanent baptism and endowment of power.
 - *"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"* Acts 1:5, 8
3. All the promises made by God in the Old Testament and by Jesus Christ concerning the Holy Spirit and His special gifts of ministry were witnessed for the very first time on the day of Pentecost.
4. Before Christ, when God called a person for a particular work, God always provided the gifts and abilities needed to do the work. God has always equipped His people to do the work of the ministry. However, since Christ and the day of Pentecost, there is one great and remarkable difference: every believer is called and gifted by God to minister. That is what Pentecost was all about. God expects every believer to be a witness to the salvation of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. To be a witness is one of the primary reasons God gives

¹ Taken from The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible

the Holy Spirit to every believer, and it is certainly the reason He provides spiritual gifts. The gifts and abilities are given to be used—used in sharing Christ and in ministering to the desperate needs of the poor and suffering masses of this lost and dying world.

In conclusion: Scripture says unmistakably that there are spiritual gifts—special gifts and abilities given by the Holy Spirit to be used in the church and in the ministry to reach the world for Christ. However, as in the secular world, when a man receives a gift, he does not always use his gift wisely nor in a way it should be used; so it is in the church. Christian believers do not always use their spiritual gifts wisely nor as God wants them used. This happened to the believers in the Corinthian church, and unfortunately, it happens to multitudes of believers in churches around the world in every generation. The misuse and abuse of God's gifts are the very reason the world has never been reached for Jesus Christ. This fact alone stresses the desperate need for a study of these chapters.

LESSON:

1 Corinthians 12:1-3 United By Our Confession

12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. The Corinthian church was about to be torn apart because of the controversy over spiritual gifts. Now, Paul, the author, turns to the issues raised in the Corinthians' letter to him—spiritual gifts. There are many gifts, but they are not all listed here. So, what are spiritual gifts? They are special abilities given to each person by the Holy Spirit and they are called "spiritual gifts" that become our spiritual power, always to help the church function more effectively; ministering to people, and in leading them to Christ; enabling the believer to serve Christ in the church and in the world, but not to divide. Paul says that he does not want them to be ignorant. ***There is a danger of being ignorant.*** Instead of building and unifying the Corinthian church, spiritual gifts were splitting it.

- A person can be ignorant that there is such a thing as spiritual gifts. He can fail to know that God endows the genuine believer with very special gifts.
- A person may not know that God gifts His people, but he may not know what special gifts God has given him; may not know what God wants him to do for Christ and the church.
- A person may know what his gifts are, but he may not know how to properly use them. It was at this point that the Corinthian church was having so much trouble. Many of the believers knew their spiritual gifts, but they were misusing them, failing to use them as God willed them to be used.

12:2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. At one time they were non-Christian pagans which led them to worship idols that couldn't speak.

- They had been "*Gentiles*"; now they were Christians; followers of Christ.
- They had been worshippers of idols who were dumb and voiceless, unable to communicate, and relate. But now they were worshippers of the only true and living God who could communicate and share with them.
- They had been "*carried away*" and "*led*" by some force, energy, or spiritual power to serve the dumb idols. But now they were under the power of God's Spirit; therefore, they were to be led by His Spirit.

The point is: Many of the believers in Corinth were converts from paganism. Therefore, they would have been familiar with the counterfeit gifts. Some of them would have practiced these gifts in their former religion before their conversion. ***There is the danger of being carried away to false worship.*** Apparently some of them...

- Had used a counterfeit gift to imitate the real gift.
- Had misused the gift and ended up not really worshipping God, but worshipping in a meaningless way.
- Had begun to feel and act super-spiritual, worshipping the gift and self, rather than focusing attention upon God.

12:3 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. Some persons in the Corinth church

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apparently spoke by the Spirit and distorted the great truth that "*Jesus is Lord.*" The person took the truth that Paul had preached, that "*Christ was made a curse for us*" (Gal.3:13), and he said something to the effect that "*Jesus is accursed.*" ***There is the danger of speaking false messages.*** Two general principles to bear in mind:

1. No one speaking by the Spirit of God will call Jesus accursed (3a).

There is the danger of speaking the truth apart from the Holy Spirit. They were professing truth, but had not really committed their lives to the truth. They are counterfeits and not really led by the Spirit of God. No spiritual truth can ever be used effectively by God apart from the leadership of His Spirit.

2. No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (3b).

1 Corinthians 12: 4-7 United In Service

12:4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. God had blessed believers with an abundance of spiritual gifts so they could effectively minister in the church and to the citizens of pagan Corinth. Paul needed to get over the point that diversities of gifts had to be unified; united in service, not in misuse and abuse, not in arguments and debates, strife and division. And many of the believers had misunderstood and abusing the gifts. The diversities of gifts have three points to show...

1. ***There are different gifts, but they all come from the same Spirit.*** The choice is entirely the Holy Spirit's as He wills. It is not the believer's choice. They are not just for the benefit of the person who received the gift, but for others.

12:5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

2. ***There are different ministries or office of serving (administrations), but they are all done by the authority of the same Lord.***

12:6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

3. ***There are different activities and operations in carrying out the various ministries, but it is the same God.***

The point is: Spiritual gifts are given by the same Spirit; the same Lord; the same God referred to as the Trinity united in service; working in unity together; one is not without the other; gifts working in their different offices and actions!

12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. The gifts are not given to believers for their own gratification or for them to revel in a sense of self-importance and super-spirituality. The believer does of course, profit and benefit from the gift given him, but he is gifted primarily to edify and help others. This is seen in the word "*manifestation.*" It means to be openly and publicly seen. The gifts of the Spirit are to be openly and publicly used to profit all. They are...

- to be manifested to the church, that is, used to edify the church.
- to be manifested to the world, that is, used to benefit the world (reaching the lost).

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 United In The Spirit

12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

The list of different gifts are given to show just how diverse the gifts of the Spirit really are. This verse begins nine powerful gifts given by the indwelling Spirit of God. Just as we have natural abilities inherited through our genes to function in the world, we have spiritual abilities or gifts inherited through the Spirit's power to function properly in the spiritual world. They are in three categories: (1) **The Revelation gifts**—the Word of Wisdom, the Word of Knowledge, and the Discerning of Spirits. (2) **The Vocal gifts**—Prophecy, Tongues, and Interpretation of Tongues. (3) **The Power gifts**—faith, healing, miracles.

1. As He wills, to one is given the "**Word of Wisdom.**" ²Wisdom is clearly taught in the Word of God. it says, "*The*

² <http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/what-are-gifts-of-the-spirit-a-bible-study/>
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fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding" (Psalm 111:10). With this wisdom, Solomon could understand what do in difficult decisions. "Wisdom" means the wise thoughts of God; the truth God revealed to man; to share in simple and understandable language.

2. To another the "**Word of Knowledge**" is given by the same Spirit. This is practical spiritual knowledge; insight as to what to do in day-to-day situations that arise and the Word to operate in the spirit. It does no good to know truth unless a person knows how to use the truth.³ Some people have such a gift of remembering scriptures. A "Word of Knowledge" would quickly come to distinguish which is biblical and which is not; what to pray for or how to minister to a need. The "Word of wisdom" and the "Word of Knowledge" are revelation gifts operating together in the Spirit.

12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;—

3. The Bible speaks of several different types of faith which increase from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). The "**Gift of Faith**" not only operates in healings and miracles, but in the realm of the impossible. This is not the usual faith that we mean when we speak about saving faith. This is a strong faith, a powerful faith, wonder-working faith that enables a believer to do great things for God and His people. It is a trust and confidence in God that allows them to live boldly for Him and manifest that faith in mighty ways, all by the same Spirit.
4. The Bible speaks of "**Gifts of Healing**" because there is physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. Healing can come through *the touch of faith* or *laying on of hands* (James 5:14-15; Mark 6:5; Luke 4:40) *speaking the Word of Faith* (Luke 7:1-10); and *the presence of God being manifested (Working of Miracles)* (Mark 6:56; Acts 19:11-12). All spiritual gifts are to be exercised in faith, but gifts of healings involve a special measure of it, all by the same Spirit.

⁴The Disciples were given authority to heal and cast out demons, but they were not always successful. The Apostle Paul was not able to heal himself and was told that God's grace was sufficient to carry him through his infirmity without removing it from him (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). This gift is given at various times and places to reveal the God of heaven to the sick and tormented. If healing is not granted, then we can conclude that God has greater plans for letting the person go through the illness or infirmity.

The spiritual gift of healing is an intimate one as it reveals the heart and compassion of God. Jesus is the Great Healer and Physician. During His ministry on earth He healed countless people and cast out demons (Matthew 4:23-24; 8:16; 9:35, Mark 1:34). Healings reveal that God is near to His people and He cares about their sufferings. Healings are meant to draw people to God through His Son Jesus Christ. God wants those healed to respond in faith with thanksgiving and love as the leper did in Luke 17:15-19, and as the demon-possessed man did in Mark 5:18-20. By God's grace, physical healing should lead to spiritual healing (faith in Jesus) and eternal life with Him in heaven.

Those who have this gift are compassionate toward the sick; interceding in pray over them. They have great faith trusting that God can and will heal. They are motivated knowing that God's revealed power will draw people to faith in Jesus. Their ultimate concern is the spiritual well-being of those being healed and their relationship with Jesus; not to boast in themselves.

12:10 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:—

5. The "**Working of Miracles**" would refer to miracles other than that of healing. There are times when circumstances and situations arise, and believers need a miraculous deliverance of some sort. The word "miracles" comes from the Greek word "dunamis" which means power and might that multiplies itself. A

³ <http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/what-are-gifts-of-the-spirit-a-bible-study/>

⁴ <http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/what-are-gifts-of-the-spirit-a-bible-study/>
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"*miracle*" is the performance of something which is against the laws of nature. When it is in God's Will for a storm to cease—for an enemy to be temporarily blinded; for a fire to be turned or put out; or for an innumerable number of threats against believers to be altered—God raises up some believer and gifts him to work the needed miracle. Some other examples of this gift would be Christ stilling the storm; Paul smiting Elymas with blindness; Paul being delivered from a poisonous snake bite. Today, if any of those occurrences happened, God is able by His Spirit to use a believer with this divine gifting!

6. Sometimes God gives believers a glimpse into coming events in order to prepare and strengthen them to face the events. The "**Gift of Prophecy**" is ⁵a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted or revealing things hidden; esp. by foretelling future events they had no clue of. The believer or prophet receives revelation to publicly speak in the church under the inspiration of God's Spirit or to an individual. The Word says, "*But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort 1 Corinthians 14:3.*"
7. To another "**Discerning of Spirits**", which means to separate, differentiate; distinguish between spirits—the spirit of evil and the Spirit of God, the flesh and the spirit, error and truth. The church needs those with this gift to warn believers in times of danger or keep them from being led astray by false teaching.
8. To another "**Divers Kinds of Tongues**." This is the spiritual ability to speak forth...
 - a. from God or to God in an unknown tongue (1 Corinthians 14:2). This type of tongue...
 - *edifies you* (1Cor.14:4; Jude 20). • *assists you in prayer* (Rom.8:26-27). • *stirs up the prophetic ministry* (1Cor.14:5). • *refreshes your soul* (Is.28:11-12). • *gives victory over the devil* (Eph.6:18). • *helps you worship in the Spirit* (1Cor.14:14-15; Heb.2:12).
 - b. Some say it is a known language (1 Corinthians 14:2 and Acts 2:6).
 - c. Still others say it is a heavenly language. When we sing or pray in the Spirit, God joins in with us and *confuses and defeats the enemy* (Is.30.29-31). It *breaks the yoke of bondage* (Acts 16:25). It *brings you into the presence of God* (Ps.22:3); and it *aids in intercession* (Rom.8:26).
9. To another the "**Interpretation of Tongues**" is where some believers are able to interpret by the Spirit of God; a tongue that is understood through interpretation, edifies the church (1 Corinthians 14:15).

12:11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. All the gifts just covered are given by one and the same Spirit, not from any other source. The Spirit knows what gifts will edify the church most and what gifts can be most effective to reach the world and to minister to the desperate needs of all mankind. One believer has one gift and another believer has another gift, but both have come from the same Spirit of God.

SUMMARY:

Paul dealt with spiritual gifts in the Corinthian church because he didn't want them to be ignorant and misinformed because they were once Gentiles—by dumb idols—false worship—false messages—or even speaking the truth without the Holy Spirit's help. No spiritual truth can ever be used effectively by God apart from the leadership of His Spirit. The church needs the real spiritual gifts that are only given by the Holy Spirit. That's why we can't be ignorant of those counterfeit gifts, but stay united in our confession that Jesus is Lord by the true Spirit (**vv.1-3**).

Now, there are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit; different kinds of service, but the same Lord; and different kinds of working, but the same God united in service to work in all. The miraculous spiritual gifts are given to minister by the same Spirit as a means of helping and profiting all (**vv.4-7**).

There are nine spiritual gifts described here. To one is given and then another dividing to every man individually as He will. But the one and same Spirit accomplishes all (**vv.8-11**).

⁵ <http://www.studylight.org/lexicons/greek/gwview.cgi?n=4394>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>