

Gift Shop

Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts...
First Corinthians 14:1

If you are a Christian, God has special gifts available to you. No Christian is left out. First Corinthians 12:7 says, "The manifestation [talking about gifts] of the Spirit is given to **every** man to profit withal." The reason for the gifts is to help you grow in the Lord, and also to edify or build up your brothers and sisters in the Lord. Ephesians 4:12 tells us that the gifts are for "the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ." The Body of Christ (all Christians) is strengthened when you use your gifts.

Spiritual gifts are not natural abilities, otherwise non-Christians would have them, too. Spiritual gifts are supernatural abilities given by the Holy Spirit to Christians.

There are several lists of gifts in the New Testament:

1. The gifts listed in the fourth chapter of Ephesians are **office** gifts. There are the offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher.
2. The gifts listed in the twelfth chapter of Romans are **ministry** gifts. These gifts are given to Christians as ongoing gifts throughout their lives to minister to others.
3. The gifts listed in First Corinthians, chapter twelve, are **manifestation** gifts. These gifts are manifested through the believer as they are ministering to the Lord or others. In fact, we should expect the manifestation gifts when we come to minister before the Lord and others.

Here is an example of how the gifts work together: Think of a pastor being in the office of a pastor, using a ministry gift of, let's say, teaching. While he is ministering with this gift, the Lord manifests a word of knowledge to him. As he steps out in faith, and mentions it, a person's life is touched by God.

Office Gifts - Ephesians 4:11

Apostle - The gift of apostle applies to a special group of men who were "apostles of Christ," consisting of 12 (Luke 6:12,13; Matthias was chosen in Acts to replace Judas) together with Paul (Galatians 1:1). In a general sense, it could

well apply to those sent out with a commission used to describe "apostles of the churches" (Second Corinthians 8:23, Philippians 2:25) such as missionaries. (Barnabas, Acts 14:14, James, the Lord's brother calling Silas, First Thessalonians 2:6).

Prophets - Men of inspired utterance for the young church; See Acts 15:32 where it is said that in Antioch "Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed [strengthened] many."

Evangelists - This word occurs in the New Testament three times. Luke calls Phillip an evangelist in Acts 21:8. Timothy is told to do the work of an evangelist in Second Timothy 4:5. The evangelist is a messenger, a deliverer of the "Good News." The primary message of the evangelist centers on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, His coming again, and the need for all men everywhere to repent and believe.

Pastor-Teachers - Literally, "*shepherds*," meaning to feed the flock with spiritual food and to protect the flock from spiritual danger; gifted to be responsible for the day to day building of the church.

Ministry Gifts - Romans 12:6-8

Prophecy - This is a ministry gift and also a manifestation gift. (See explanation under manifestation gifts).

Ministering - "Personal ministering." Ministering to the personal needs of the believers. In Acts, chapter 6, the needs of the growing church were met by those with the gift of ministering as filled by seven deacons. (Gift of practical service).

Teaching - The message of Christ is to be proclaimed but must also be explained. This is the ministry of the teacher. It is having the ability to convey spiritual truths to others so they understand them and will want to apply them to their lives.

Exhortation - The Greek word means literally, "to call alongside." It is the word *paraclete*. It is the ability to come along side of a fellow Christian and help them in the way of counseling, encouragement, and advice. (Galatians 6:2, Romans 15:1).

Giving - "Cheerful liberality." It is having the desire and faith to give above and beyond the normal tithe and offerings. This includes things other than just money; like time, cloths, food, etc. It is simple kindness which delights in the sheer pleasure of giving for giving's sake.

Ruling, Governments - The gift of administration. The gift of management of the affairs of the church. It must be carried out with zeal and diligence while showing compassion to those you are working with.

Mercy - Joyful compassion. Getting on the inside of another person while bringing a cheerfulness to their wounded heart. The ability to empathize with another person going through difficulties and helping them realize the great love and forgiveness God has for them.

Hospitality - (First Peter 4:9-10) The desire and ability to open up your heart and home to others to make them feel welcomed and comfortable. Doing just this meets the needs of countless people. When coupled with other gifts, it conveys the love of Christ.

Helps - (First Corinthians 12:28) There were apparently people without holding a particular office, rendered services to the church enabled by the special gifts of the Spirit which they had received. Having the ability to see a need and doing something about it. (Such as cooking meals for a family in need, special work at the church, helping the poor).

Manifestation Gifts - First Corinthians 12:7-10

Word of knowledge - The word of knowledge is a supernatural revelation by the Holy Spirit of certain facts in the mind of God. God gives you a revelation by the Spirit of some detail of His infinite knowledge about a person or situation that you have no way of finding out. The first thing to do when you receive a work of knowledge is to pray whether you should share it with the person, or church, or whether it should be kept between you and God so that you might intercede for the individual.

Word of Wisdom - An unprepared inspired word from God given by the Holy Spirit spontaneously to meet a particular crisis situation or answer some question directed at you.

Prophecy - In it's simplest form, it is a supernaturally inspired and anointed utterance conveying what is on the heart and mind of God. Its purpose is edification, exhortation, and comfort of the entire Body. Edification means that prophecy will build-up those that hear. Exhortation means to encourage, urge-on or stir-up love. Comfort means to console.

Faith - The gift of faith is above and beyond the 'average' amount of faith. It is when, without any question, you know the thinking desired will come to pass because it is a gift of faith that comes direct from God, not your experience or spiritual maturity.

Healing - Healing can take place: By the individual praying for himself to be healed and having faith to expect the results (James 5:15, Matthew 9:29); by having the elders pray for you (James 5:14); and by praying for each other in the Body (James 5:16). Also, healings take place as a gift that is given by God and can occur without anything accomplished by others. It is by God's sheer grace and generosity that He may choose to heal and no one can lay claim to the reasons why the healing took place but God.

Miracles - Asking God to do something that supercedes the natural laws that we know, like asking God to part the Red Sea, multiply food, or change circumstances (like the weather) to meet a need and glorify God.

Discerning of Spirits - The ability to know a false teaching when presented; whether someone is demon-possessed; or if someone is not what they say they are.

Tongues - is a language given to a Christian that is unknown to him. It is praise or prayer directed to God, *not* men (First Corinthians 14:2). It's purpose is to edify and strengthen the Christian exercising it. If it is interpreted, it edifies others.

Interpretation of Tongues - is being given the understanding of tongues spoken by someone else or yourself, even though you don't know the language. And since tongues is praise or prayer to God, not men, a true interpretation will be praise or prayer also. Remember, it is an interpretation, *not* a word for word translation.

How Do You Know Which Gifts God Has Given You?

We can trust in God to know exactly which gifts will be best for us. It is encouraging and comforting to know that God is the One who decides how to distribute the gifts (First Corinthians 12:11).

First of all then, go to God in prayer and ask Him to reveal which gifts He has distributed to you. You may find out the next day, you may not realize which ones you have until later.

Try an area of ministry. The Holy Spirit unveils gifts as we are willing to step out in faith and help others. There is no shame in trying even if the area of ministry doesn't end up being yours.

Delight in the Lord. As we delight ourselves in the Lord, He shall give us the desires of our hearts. (Psalm 37:4) If our motives are pure, our desires will line up with God's. A desire for certain gifts may give an indication. Remember, it is still up to God to distribute, so a desire for a certain gift does not guarantee it.

Do you enjoy an area of ministry? The word for gift (*charisma*) is related to the word for joy (*chara*). There is a joy that comes when we help others with the use of the gifts.

Ask other brothers and sisters in the Lord which gifts they notice in you. It will help to get an objective viewpoint.

Combining all these together should give you a good indication of which gifts God has given you.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Part 1 - First Corinthians 12a

Introduction

There is perhaps no subject concerning which there is greater ignorance in the church today than the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The ignorance is on both sides of this controversial issue, among *charismatics* and among *cessationists*.

The word "charismatic" comes to us from the Greek word *charisma*, the word for spiritual gifts. Charismatics are those who believe that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in Scripture are still functioning today. Sadly, many charismatics are really *charismaniacs!* Their ignorance is that they revel in the unscriptural exercise of certain gifts, and they accept all manner of wild phenomena as valid, with or without a biblical basis.

"Cessationists" are those who believe that certain gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased to function in the church today. They confine gifts like miracles, healings, tongues, and prophecy to the apostolic founding of the church in the first century. Their ignorance is that they overlook church history and they take Scripture out of context to prove their points.

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth and said, "Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant." All of the gifts were being exercised at Corinth; that tells us Paul was **not** a cessationist! But Paul had to correct their unscriptural exercise of the gifts; that tells us Paul was **not** a charismaniac!

We want to be like Paul - neither cessationists nor charismaniacs. All of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are available to us today, and we want to exercise them according to the guidelines clearly set forth in the Scriptures.

In the opening verses of First Corinthians Twelve you will learn that God doesn't want you to be ignorant (1) about how spiritual gifts operate, (2) about where spiritual gifts originate, or (3) about why spiritual gifts are obtained.

#1 God Doesn't Want You To Be Ignorant About How Spiritual Gifts Operate (v1-3)

Over the years I have noted that people usually have a background, and that their background can be a stronger influence on their behavior than the Bible. One time, while teaching on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I read the words of First Corinthians 14:2 & 3,

"For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men."

The words clearly state that, when you speak in tongues, you are speaking to God - *not* to men. You speak for God to men through prophecy.

Clear as that may be, one man took issue with me and was visibly upset. You see, he had grown up in a charismatic church where people would speak in tongues and then the tongues would be interpreted as God speaking to men. He never would agree with what the Bible said! His background was a stronger influence on his behavior than the Bible.

This was a problem in Corinth, as you see in the opening verses of our text:

1 Corinthians 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

1 Corinthians 12:2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.

The Gentile believers at Corinth had been saved out of Greek mystery religions in which wild spiritual experiences were normal. These people were accustomed to being "carried away" in experiences that were called either *ecstasies* or *enthusiasms*:

"Ecstasies" were supernatural contacts with the pagan deities. Through frenzied hypnotic chants and ceremonies the worshippers experienced semiconscious euphoric trances.

"Enthusiasms" involved chanting, divination, and dreams.¹

Ecstasies and enthusiasms were coveted spiritual experiences. In them you were carried away by the power of the deity - whom we would call a demon - having no control over what you said or did.

The Corinthians brought this background into the church! They were used to being carried away in their worship, having no control over what they said or did; they carried this practice over into their exercise of spiritual gifts as Christians. That's why, in First Corinthians 14:23, Paul could say,

1 Corinthians 14:23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

Paul told them that the gifts of the Holy Spirit do not operate like ecstasies and enthusiasms:

¹MacArthur, *First Corinthians*, p. 280.

1 Corinthians 12:3 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.

Paul's correction to them is twofold: When the gifts of the Spirit are operating, the Holy Spirit will not violate *your will* nor will He violate *God's Word!*

The Holy Spirit Will Not Violate Your Will:

Look at Paul's statement, "no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed." The people had undoubtedly heard this said in their pagan ecstasies and enthusiasms; perhaps they had said this themselves while out of control. They had been unwilling participants, doing and saying things against their own will.

The Holy Spirit will not come upon you in such a way as to violate your own will and cause you to do or say something as an unwilling participant! Paul will later amplify this, saying in First Corinthians 14:32, "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."

This is an especially important principle for charismatics, so they don't act like charismaniacs...

The Holy Spirit Will Not Violate God's Word:

The Spirit cannot cause you to do or say anything that is contrary to God's Word. Paul says, "no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." "Jesus is Lord!" was an early Christian creed; it was a doctrinal statement. One of the things Paul is saying here is that however the Holy Spirit gifts you, it will be in doctrinal accord and agreement with everything in God's already revealed Word. The Holy Spirit will never contradict Himself.

This is an especially important principle for cessationists...

#2 God Does Not Want You To Be Ignorant
About Where Spiritual Gifts Originate
(v4-6)

Sometimes it is important to state the obvious. It should be obvious that spiritual gifts come from God, but Paul takes the time to state it anyway, in verses four, five, and six:

1 Corinthians 12:4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.

1 Corinthians 12:6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

God the Holy Spirit is mentioned in verse four; God the Son, Jesus Christ your Lord, is mentioned in verse five; God the Father is mentioned in verse six. The whole trinity is involved in spiritual gifts! Spiritual gifts originate with God.

That brings up an important point: Gifts are *given* to you. They are never *earned* or *learned*. That is obvious enough; yet many ignore the obvious:

Believers see certain gifts as evidence they have earned God's favor and reward in their lives for maturity and holiness...

Other believers go to seminars to learn how to obtain certain gifts...
God sovereignly gives you the gifts that are most appropriate with His plan for your walk and work and witness.

The question always comes up, "What are the best gifts to have, and how do I receive them?" We will answer that question when we get to First Corinthians 12:31. For now, let me say this:

"Best" is a relative term. The best gift to have is the one that is most needed in the church at that time!

As to how you receive a gift or gifts: They are given sovereignly by God! You have little choice. Leave it up to your wise and gracious God to give you what He deems as right and good to benefit you and to build up others.

These verses contain a wonderful theology of the gifts, speaking as they do of the "diversity," or the *variety*, of "gifts... ministries... [and] activities."

There are a variety of gifts. Paul mentions nine in verses eight and nine; at the end of chapter twelve, in verse twenty-eight, he adds three more. There are more gifts listed in Romans Twelve; in Ephesians Four; and in First Peter Four. Next week we will occupy ourselves with a discussion of the individual gifts.

There are a variety of ministries. The NIV Bible translates the word "ministries" as *service*. We each *serve* the Lord in different ways, depending upon how he has gifted us. If we remember this, we will not compare ourselves to others and covet their gifts! The gifts God has chosen for you are the best gifts.

There are a variety of activities. This means that people with the same gift will exercise the gift differently. The Holy Spirit respects your unique personality and idiosyncracies. Don't try to copy the way someone else ministers! Don't feel more or less spiritual based on the style of your ministry.

This is Paul's theology of spiritual gifts: Gifts originate with God; there are many gifts; one or more is sovereignly given to you to serve the Lord; you will exercise

your gift or gifts in ways that are consistent with your uniqueness as a child of God.

#3 God Does Not Want You To Be Ignorant About Why Spiritual Gifts Are Obtained (v7-11)

Why obtain spiritual gifts?

1 Corinthians 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

When you exercise spiritual gifts, the Holy Spirit is *manifested* through you and He *ministers* to God's saints.

"Manifested" means that the Holy Spirit makes Himself felt through the exercise of the gifts. Let's give an example. Many times on Sunday morning folks come up to me after the teaching and claim that I was speaking directly to and about their lives! What is really happening is that the Holy Spirit is manifesting Himself to you - making Himself felt through the exercise of the gift of teaching. The result is that you are powerfully ministered to - knowing that God Himself has been speaking directly to your heart.

Concerning this subject of the Holy Spirit manifesting Himself, Pastor Chuck Smith cautions us,

"The true gifts of the Holy Spirit, when manifested in a scriptural and correct way, will always focus people's hearts on Jesus Christ. Jesus said that the Spirit would not testify of Himself, but of Christ. The scriptural exercise of the gifts will always give you a fresh vision of Jesus Christ and His glory, causing you to fall in love with Him, and to be drawn to Him all over again. Your heart will almost explode with love and appreciation for [Who] Jesus is and what He is able to do."²

When someone exercises a gift, ask yourself: Who is getting the glory? Be careful when ministering to others that you don't begin to subtly promote yourself!

The gifts are "given to each one for the profit of all." The purpose of the gifts is to profit the whole church. The focus of the gifts is on others, on those you minister to.

One author put it this way: Spiritual gifts are not toys you play with; they are tools you build with!

Some of those tools are listed for you:

²*Living Water*, p. 90.

1 Corinthians 12:8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,
1 Corinthians 12:9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,
1 Corinthians 12:10 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.

These and the other gifts listed in Scripture are the tools that the Holy Spirit distributes to build-up the church:

1 Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

The word for "works" is *energeo*, where we get our word *energy*. The Holy Spirit energizes and empowers these gifts, giving one or more to you as He sees fit, so you can best serve God's saints.

Conclusion

God does not want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts!

Don't be or become a charismaniac... Don't be or become a cessationist...

Instead, take Pastor Chuck's advice:

"May nothing stand in the way of [the Holy Spirit] imparting to us those gifts that might benefit us and edify the church. Let us commit ourselves and the exercise of these gifts of the Spirit to God. Then may God empower us, and use us, as He sees fit."³

³*Ibid.*, p. 97.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Part 2 – First Corinthians 12b

Introduction

Some years ago one of the ladies in our fellowship caused some confusion in her family regarding the character of the man she was engaged to marry. In her letters to her family and friends she frequently mentioned her fiancé's DET (pronounced *debt*). The more she spoke of his DET, the more troubled her family and friends understandably became. Finally someone realized that she wasn't describing financial "debt"; her fiancé was in the military, where DET is short for *detachment!* Everyone breathed a sigh of relief once the term she was using was properly defined.

We want to take some time to define the gifts of the Holy Spirit. What is meant by the word of wisdom, or the word of knowledge? How is the gift of faith different from faith that every believer has and is called upon to grow in? Those are the kinds of things we need to try to nail down so that the words we are using are not causing unnecessary confusion among God's people.

Having said that, we want to remain cautious. Definitions are like dissections: You can learn a lot about an animal by dissecting it, but when you're done it is a lifeless corpse rather than a vibrant body. We want to keep our definitions and discussions subordinate to the Bible's teaching that the gifts are a vital part of a vibrant, living body - the body of Jesus Christ on earth.

To begin with I will make a somewhat arbitrary distinction of the gifts. In studying the Bible texts, commentators usually see two or three "categories" into which gifts can be organized. Bear in mind, these are only for the purposes of organizing the material into a more concise teaching; they are not categories that the Bible itself speaks of, and some gifts are hard, if not impossible, to put into a single category.

Here is how, for our purposes of study, we will organize the gifts: There are *speaking* gifts, there are *sign* gifts, and there are *serving* gifts. The Holy Spirit gives some of you speaking gifts; He gives some of you sign gifts; He gives some of you serving gifts.

This week we will take a brief look at the speaking gifts...

The Holy Spirit Gives Some Of You Speaking Gifts

Gifts are supernatural enablements that the Holy Spirit gives you in order that you might manifest the presence of Jesus as you minister to His people on earth. They are not your natural abilities; they are not your natural abilities enhanced by

the Holy Spirit. They are the Holy Spirit's supernatural enablements. You should certainly dedicate all of your natural abilities to God for Him to use as He sees fit. But when we talk about the gifts of the Spirit, we are talking about enablings that are beyond your abilities.

What we are calling the "speaking" gifts are a good example of this. Many people have wonderful natural speaking abilities; or they have honed their meager natural abilities by much study and practice. Yet, try as you might, you cannot learn to exercise the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, prophecy, the discerning of spirits, tongues, the interpretation of tongues, teaching, or exhortation. These speaking gifts can only come from the supernatural enabling of the Holy Spirit. Let's look briefly at each of them.

First on Paul's list in First Corinthians 12:8 is "the word of wisdom through the spirit." As a believer, you are to grow in wisdom. Solomon said, in Proverbs 4:7, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom." As you study of God's Word, you will begin more and more to see things the way God sees them. You will grow in wisdom.

But here we are not talking about the kind of wisdom that comes from experience or exposure to Scripture. Beyond wisdom in general, there is a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit that is called "the word of wisdom." It isn't a reservoir of wisdom that you can tap into at will; it is the Holy Spirit anointing you in a time of ministering to someone, giving you the right words to say. It is the Holy Spirit using you to say just the words Jesus would say to the person or persons in need.

Jesus often demonstrated the word of wisdom. When asked if it were lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not - a question with a no-win answer - Jesus exercised the word of wisdom. "Show Me a coin," He said, then asked, "Whose likeness and inscription are on it?" The crowd said, "Caesar's." Jesus replied, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and give to God the things that are God's."⁴ It was the word of wisdom in operation.

I've shared with you before that many times in counseling I have no idea what to say to a person. I've memorized Scripture; I've had lots of experience with situations similar to theirs; but I realize that without God's help my words would be the law that kills rather than the Spirit that gives life. So I start talking anyway! And after fumbling around a lot, the Holy Spirit will put a Scripture, or a Bible story, or a metaphor in my mind that I had never thought of before. As I share it, there is a wonderful ministry of the Holy Spirit to the heart of the one whom God loves. It's the word of wisdom at work.

⁴Luke 20:22-26

The word of knowledge is the next gift Paul mentions. This is not the accumulation of information you can know by acquisition or study. All of you can and should learn as much as possible about God's Word. But that is not the word of knowledge.

The word of knowledge is information given to you supernaturally. It is a divine impartation of knowledge concerning a person or situation that did not come through natural thought processes. It is information that, as Pastor Chuck Smith says, "God flashes into your mind."

The Apostle Peter, in Acts chapter five, exercised the word of knowledge in his dealings with Ananias and Sapphira. He knew by the word of knowledge that they had lied to God when they claimed to have given the church the full sales price of their property.

It's probably not the word of knowledge when someone has a general "word" that they say is from God. For example: In Honduras, the Church we visited gave the pulpit to a visiting minister from the US. It didn't take us long to realize he was into the word-faith, positive confession heresy. At the end of his talk, he had a "word" that there were many people in the audience who had kidney problems. I'm sure there were! But generalized kidney problems are not uncommon, and it was so broad a statement that it caused me to seriously doubt that it was the word of knowledge. As Pastor Chuck says,

"Don't get me wrong. I want to be as open minded as I can be - but not so much that I am gullible... When people pass off as spiritual gifts what is not of the Spirit, their actions belittle the genuine and prejudice others against the authentic work of the Spirit."⁵

Prophecy is next on Paul's list. Prophecy and the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues are the subject of First Corinthians Fourteen; we will look at them more fully when we get to that chapter in subsequent weeks. For now we would define them like this:

Prophecy is a supernaturally inspired and anointed utterance conveying what is on the mind and heart of God; it is speaking forth the Word of God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It can be a foretelling of the future, but most often it is a *forthtelling* of God's Word. It's exercise brings edification, exhortation, and comfort to the believers.

The gift of tongues is the supernatural enablement to worship God through prayer and praise in a known or unknown language you have not naturally learned.

⁵*Living Water*, p. 116.

The interpretation of tongues is obviously a companion gift to tongues. The interpretation of tongues is the Holy Spirit giving you the understanding of tongues spoken by someone else or by yourself even though you don't know the language. And it is an interpretation, *not* a translation. Translation is a word-for-word transfer from one language to another. Interpretation is something that goes farther, explaining the meaning regardless the particular words spoken. The words are not as important in an interpretation as are the concepts being expressed.

Prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues are often classified as sign gifts that ceased to function after the initial founding of the Church by the apostles in the first century. They did not cease to function, and they are still available to you today! We'll say something about why we believe they and the other sign gifts haven't ceased next week, and we'll see the proper way to exercise them in the Church when we get to Chapter Fourteen.

The discerning of spirits is next on Paul's list. Remember when I said earlier that we shouldn't force our categories too much? The discerning of spirits is a good example. Is it a speaking gift? Or is it a sign gift? It's a spiritual gift, and we don't want to try to minimize it by categorizing it. For our purposes we will take a look at it today as a speaking gift.

Again, all of you can and should exercise discernment. There are false teachings and false teachers that you can discern from your study and understanding of the truth of God's Word. There are passages like Second Peter and Jude that teach you how to discern false teachings and false teachers. We need to be discerning in these last days.

The gift of discerning of spirits is something more. According to the Bible, there are two realms coexisting, the natural realm and the spiritual realm. For the most part, we are not conscious of the spiritual realm. Nevertheless it has a very real influence on our lives - either for good or for evil. There is a realm of spirit beings that are hostile to you and your walk with Jesus. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:12, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." A battle is being waged in this spiritual realm, and all of you are involved in it. It is in this spiritual realm, and against these hostile beings, that the discernment of spirits comes into play. It is a supernatural enabling to know that a teaching or a prophecy is false, or that a demonic presence or influence is at work.

Discerning of spirits can be frustrating. You can be the only one who has the feeling that something isn't quite right with a person or situation. And it's tough to say to someone, "I have a discernment about you," when, as yet, there is no tangible evidence of any problem or difficulty. Plus, your own sin nature can

cause you to be suspicious or judgmental and then excuse it by saying you have discernment!

Even with all its difficulties, if you even think that you have the discernment of spirits you should act accordingly, as it is God's warning.

Those are the speaking gifts listed in our passage, but those are not all the speaking gifts listed in the Bible. Turn with me to Romans 12:6-8:

Romans 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

Romans 12:7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

Romans 12:8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Here is another list of gifts. We have already encountered some of these gifts in First Corinthians; but new to us are "ministry," "teaching," "exhortation," "giving," "leading," and "mercy." Let's look at the two speaking gifts on this list - teaching and exhortation.

Like the other things we've talked about, there can be a call on your life to teach whether or not you have the gift of teaching. For example, if you are a parent, you are commanded to teach and train your children.

There is also a gift of teaching. The gift of teaching is the Spirit of God using the man of God to share the Word of God. Ability is not as important as anointing. An uneducated, Spirit-filled man of God is a more reliable source of the truth of God than an unconverted scholar who understands Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic.

Here at Calvary Chapel we make a distinction between teaching and preaching. Preaching is declaring the Gospel to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is essentially evangelistic, proclaiming God's good news that He has provided the forgiveness of sins through His crucified Son, who took our guilt and died in our place. Preaching persuades people to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Teaching is not for unbelievers; it is for believers. Teaching enables those who have accepted Jesus to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of God, to enable a believer's growth and development.

If you have the gift of teaching, you depend upon the Holy Spirit to empower both your *study* and your *speaking*:

The Holy Spirit must empower your study. Facts, figures, and formulas are good as far as they go. But these alone will not reach hearts. There must be a sense in your studying to teach that God has a message for those people on that day,

and that you must discover it through meditation - which is simply the Word of God plus prayer over it. You must have the experience of the Apostle Paul, who said in First Corinthians 11:3, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you."

The Holy Spirit must empower your speaking, too. In Nehemiah 9:20 you read, "You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them." Even though you have prepared, you must go on depending upon the Holy Spirit's anointing in the presentation.

If I am well-studied, I'll be well-prepared. If I'm well-prepared, the Holy Spirit can actually have a greater freedom to use me. I can be confident that I have words He has anointed in my notes. But I can also sense His prompting me to say things I hadn't yet considered, that are not in my notes. Often when this happens I am, without knowing it, exercising the word of wisdom or the word of knowledge or prophecy. It is this Spirit-led preparation and presentation that gives believers the sense that God has been speaking directly to them.

All of us are to exhort and encourage one another. The writer to the Hebrews calls upon all believers to "exhort one another daily."⁶ We are all to exhort one another to love and good works.

There is also a spiritual gift of exhortation. People with the gift of exhortation inspire you to do what you should already be doing. They get you back on track, get your eyes focused on Jesus, and help you see things in their proper biblical perspective. The exhorter is able to direct your attention away from your difficulties and toward the Lord and His power and His love and His concern for you. The exhorter reminds you that God is on His throne.

The classic exhorter in the New Testament is James. Just read his letter and you'll get a feel for the gift. James writes to you and says, "Be mature! Do the things that you are instructed and empowered to do!"

Conclusion

The word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, prophecy, the discerning of spirits, tongues, the interpretation of tongues, teaching, and exhortation. As we defined them, I pray we did not reduce them to something less than the vibrant, living ministries they are meant to be.

These speaking gifts are active in the church today, and are available to some of you.

⁶Hebrews 3:13

The question always comes up: "How do I discover if I have one or more of these gifts?" I've seen many formulas over the years, some good, some not so good. The biblical formula is found inbetween the last verse of First Corinthians Twelve and the first verse of First Corinthians Fourteen.

In verse thirty-one of chapter twelve Paul says,

1 Corinthians 12:31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

Then, in First Corinthians 14:1 you read,

1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts...

Inbetween First Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1 is Paul's answer for how you discover your spiritual gift or gifts - First Corinthians Thirteen, the love chapter. **Walk in love towards other believers!** As you do, you will desire to see them ministered to by God, and you will make yourself available to God. God will then prompt you how to best minister to them. You will find the Holy Spirit flowing through you and then overflowing from you into their lives. Afterward you will look at what happened and be able, to a certain extent, to call it by the name of one or more of the gifts listed in Scripture.

The place to start in discovering your gifts is not with the list of gifts; it is with your love for God and your love for God's people. Love qualifies the statement, "desire the best gifts." The best gifts are the one's that are most suited to ministering to the spiritual need or needs of the people of God who you encounter.

Walk in love, focusing on the needs of others, and you will naturally discover the supernatural gifts the Holy Spirit has sovereignly chosen for you.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Part 3 - First Corinthians 12c

Introduction

I am struck by the Apostle Paul's almost nonchalant mention of extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit right alongside those we commonly consider more ordinary. For example: In his lists of the gifts he mentions "healings" and "helps"; he mentions "miracles" and "ministry"; he mentions "tongues" and "teaching." Healings, miracles, and tongues seem so extraordinary to us; Helps, ministry, and teaching seem so ordinary.

Paul evidently intended for us to realize that all of the gifts are to be regarded as *both* extraordinary and ordinary:

Gifts - all of them, no matter how ordinary they may seem to us - are to be regarded as extraordinary. They are the supernatural enablements given to believers of every age by the Holy Spirit.

Gifts - all of them, no matter how extraordinary they may seem to us - are to be regarded as ordinary, in this sense: It should be our ordinary expectation that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit be at work in the Church.

Keep that in mind as we continue our discussion of the gifts. We have put the gifts in three categories: Speaking gifts, sign gifts, and serving gifts. All are extraordinary, yet it should be our ordinary expectation that they be at work in the life of our Church.

Last week we took a look at the speaking gifts: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, prophecy, the discerning of spirits, tongues, the interpretation of tongues, teaching, and exhortation. This week we want to look at the sign gifts and the serving gifts: faith, gifts of healings, the working of miracles; helps, administrations, ministry, giving, mercy, and hospitality.

#1 The Holy Spirit Gives Some Of You Sign Gifts

This is where believers can begin to differ. Faith, gifts of healings, and the working of miracles are believed by some to have ceased. Normally prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues are put in this same category. Other believers - including myself - see no compelling Scriptural reason to believe that these gifts have ceased to function in the Church.

Pastor Chuck Smith, in his book *Living Water*, encourages us to "fight the right enemy." He says,

"Oh, that we could see the oneness of the body of Christ, that we would stop competing with or opposing others just because we don't agree with their particular doctrinal slant... One of the great catastrophes of the Church is her failure to properly identify who the real enemy is... The real enemy is Satan, and it is our task to bring men and women out of his kingdom and into the glorious kingdom of God." ⁷

Did certain gifts of the Spirit cease? Were they given only in the first century to authenticate the message of the apostles for the initial founding of the Church? Those who believe the answer is "Yes" to those questions we call *cessationists*.

The most compelling cessationist argument from Scripture, the one most often used, is Paul's statement in First Corinthians 13:8-10, which says,

1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

1 Corinthians 13:10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

Two *sign* gifts are mentioned - "prophecies" and "tongues." They are seen by cessationists to represent all the sign gifts. They are said to cease and pass away "when perfection comes." "Perfection" is interpreted by many cessationists to refer to the completion of the New Testament; therefore, with the completion of the New Testament, the sign gifts "ceased."

In recent years cessationists themselves have realized that "perfection" in this context is not a reference to the completed New Testament. John MacArthur, himself still a noted and vocal cessationist, honestly writes,

"[Perfection] is not the completion of Scripture... [It] is the eternal heavenly state of believers." ⁸

This is not the only argument from Scripture that the cessationists use, but it is their most common. Other arguments can be just as easily dealt with. As I said, there are no compelling arguments from Scripture that certain gifts have ceased.

The Holy Spirit gives some of you sign gifts: faith, gifts of healings, and the working of miracles.

The gift of faith needs to be distinguished from the faith all believers have. We would say that there are different kinds of faith.

There is *saving* faith. Saving faith is the measure of faith given to everyone that enables them to respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Salvation is by grace

⁷ pps. 94-95.

⁸ *First Corinthians*, pps. 364-365.

through faith. Grace is the fountain, and faith is the pipe or conduit through which grace flows to our hearts by which we receive Jesus Christ. Saving faith is trusting in Jesus Christ as Savior, believing that He paid the price for your sins. It is believing that the blood of Christ was shed as a sacrifice and accepted by God. As your substitute, Jesus took your sins upon Himself and died in your place, that by your believing in Him you would not perish but have everlasting life. That is saving faith.

There is also *trusting* faith. Once you are a believer, you are called upon to commit yourself to the Word of God and believe His promises. This is the kind of faith that can and should increase and grow as we walk with Jesus.

The gift of faith is neither of these; it is a supernatural enablement given to some and not to all by the Holy Spirit. It is the enablement to discern with supernatural confidence the will and purposes of God in a given situation or circumstance. It is the Holy Spirit endowing you with the confidence that God is going to work a certain way in a specific instance. It is a gift of faith planted in your heart by God.

Read the biography of George Muller and you'll see the gift of faith in operation. Muller, a century ago, had a gift of faith to build orphanages for God. He was undaunted by any and all obstacles - *including a five million dollar price tag!* The money all came in, even though he had adopted a policy of not making the needs known.

Gifts of healings are next on Paul's list. This is the only enablement that is mentioned in the plural; they are gifts of healings, not the gift of healing. If you have gifts of healings, God can use you to encourage others to believe God will heal you. But you cannot go around healing at will; it is under the sovereign control of the Holy Spirit.

Healings occurred with some frequency in the Old Testament. Healings were a large part of the New Testament : They were a major part of the ministry of Jesus; the apostles had gifts of healings. This naturally gives rise to two questions: Why, then, the lack of healings today? and, Why, then, isn't everyone healed?

Both questions can only be answered by saying that God is Sovereign over gifts of healings! In the life of Jesus and in the ministry of the apostles there were times that gifts of healings were not exercised. In the life of Jesus and in the ministry of the apostles there were times that not everyone was healed.

I like what Pastor Chuck says:

"If you are sick, I encourage you to pray and to believe and trust God for your healing. I know that God can heal you, and I encourage you to trust in Him for that healing. Let medical science do what it can, but know that it has limitations.

God is not limited, however, and God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think... He does heal.⁹

The working of miracles is an event that supersedes known natural laws. Moses parting the Red Sea; Joshua parting the Jordan River; Elisha raising the Shulamite's dead son; those are miracles. The Gospels are crammed with miracles. The Book of Acts is crammed with miracles.

Again the question is, Why, then, don't we see more miracles today? Again the answer is, The sovereignty of God! But, in addition, let me point out some other things as well.

Miracles are frequently reported by missionaries working in the field. Gospel for Asia missionaries regularly report wonderful miracles that are verified and documented.

There is one miracle that is often overlooked: **Salvation!** Salvation is a miracle. It achieves something humanly impossible - the creation of a new spirit in your heart. The presence and power of Jesus Christ that transforms lives is a miracle.

What is humanly impossible is divinely simple. As long as there is a God there will be miracles.

Sign gifts have been misused and abused. But there is no compelling Scriptural reason to say that they have ceased. Let God be sovereign; the Holy Spirit still distributes faith, gifts of healings, and the working of miracles as He sees fit.

#2 The Holy Spirit Gives Some Of You Serving Gifts

The serving gifts are helps, administrations, ministry, giving, administrations, mercy, and hospitality. As we take a brief look at them, don't think them ordinary because they seem more common to you. The same Holy Spirit Who enables healings enables helps; the same Holy Spirit Who enables miracles enables ministry.

All believers are considered ministers - servants of Jesus. But there is a supernatural gift of helps that many are given. "Helps" is first mentioned in First Corinthians 12:28. The gift of "ministry," mentioned in Romans 12:7, is the companion to helps. Helps and ministry involve seeing a need and then doing something to meet it. Helps is the attitude; ministry is the activity.

⁹*Living Water*, p. 138.

The Book of Acts records the story of Peter raising a woman named Dorcas from the dead. Overlooked because of the working of the miracle is Dorcas' gift of helps:

Acts 9:36 At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.

Acts 9:37 But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.

Acts 9:38 And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them.

Acts 9:39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.

There are many needs among God's people; no one person can minister to them all. God will show you a need; when He does, it could be that He is also calling you to meet it in His power. It could be anything from making sure there are towels in the bathroom to establishing a ministry. Be open and submissive.

If you have the gift of helps you will want to serve with joy, no matter how tedious the task. And you won't be discouraged by lack of encouragement or recognition. Those graced with the gift of helps do their service for the Lord and look to Him for their reward and recognition.

In First Corinthians 12:28 you read of the gift of administrations; this is called leadership in Romans 12:8. The KJV calls it "governments."

Most of you, at one time or another, will be in some position of administration or leadership. This is true if you are a husband; this is true if you are a wife; this is true of all parents; this is true of many occupations. All of us should lead others by love, looking to Jesus as our example.

There is also the gift of administrations. This is the supernatural enablement to manage the affairs of the Church with both diligence and compassion.

The Church has often gone wrong at this point. Often we look for a measure of material success in someone's life as the indicator they are a leader or administrator. While financial or occupational success does not disqualify you for leadership, it does not necessarily qualify you, either. Like the other gifts we must keep in mind that it is the supernatural enablement of the Holy Spirit that is needed to properly govern the Church and not the methods and machinery of human business and government.

At this point we need to turn to Romans 12:6-8. There you find another listing of gifts, including some serving gifts we want to discuss.

Romans 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

Romans 12:7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;
Romans 12:8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

"Giving" is a spiritual discipline that all believers are to practice. When we talk about giving we're definitely talking about money. It's true, you also give of your time and talent; but the Bible has a lot to say about giving of your money as well.

The New Testament principles for giving are found in Second Corinthians 8 and 9. Paul says that your giving is to be motivated by grace as you have personally purposed in your heart; that it is to be willing, honest, unpretentious, regular and cheerful. *You are left to discover the amount!* Paul knew that, when grace is your motive, you will give generously, because you will be reflecting upon the grace that God has so richly and generously bestowed upon you in salvation.

Besides the discipline of giving, there are some who have the gift of giving. Notice in Romans that Paul qualifies the gift of giving by using the term "liberality." The gift of giving is the enablement the Holy Spirit gives some of you to contribute your material resources with great liberality in order to meet the needs of others.

Barnabas had the gift of giving. In the Book of Acts, he is reported to have sold a piece of property in order to give all the proceeds to the Church for the needs of the ministry.

"Showing mercy with cheerfulness" is next on the list of gifts. One author described this as "joyful compassion; getting on the inside of another person while bringing a cheerfulness to their wounded heart; the ability to empathize with another person going through difficulties and help them realize the great love and forgiveness God has for them."

You need to show mercy, whether you have the gift or not. Jesus commanded you, in Luke 6:36, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Since God is merciful - not giving you what you deserve - you will be merciful if you have His nature in you.

The gift of mercy is something more, something given to certain members of the Church as the Holy Spirit sees fit to do so. You will be drawn to people who are in distress and you will desire to express God's love and forgiveness towards them.

That exhausts the gifts listed in Romans 6, but I want to mention one more gift. In First Peter 4:9-10 you read,

1 Peter 4:9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

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.

Most Bible commentators list hospitality as a gift of the Spirit. We are all called upon to show hospitality in caring for the needs of others; but some have a gift for it. You don't have to have the biggest house, or the nicest set of dishes, or anything like that. The gift of hospitality is a spiritual enablement that transcends your physical possessions. It is a thoughtfulness for the care of others that really thinks of their needs.

The gift of hospitality isn't just opening up your home to others; it involves opening up your heart to truly serve their needs. For example: When ministers or missionaries come to visit our fellowship, I always ask them if they would prefer to stay in a hotel or a home. Many are relieved to stay in a hotel! You see, so often they are put up in homes but, rather than being ministered to, they are expected to entertain their hosts. They get little or no sleep and even worse food!

Conclusion

We have now talked briefly about these gifts:

The speaking gifts - the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, prophecy, the discerning of spirits, tongues, the interpretation of tongues, teaching, and exhortation.

The sign gifts - faith, gifts of healings, and the working of miracles.

The serving gifts - helps, administrations, ministry, giving, administrations, mercy, and hospitality.

We will look at prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues when we arrive at First Corinthians Fourteen. We won't look at some gifts we could have discussed - apostle, evangelist, and pastor-teacher. Those will have to wait for another time.

What should our response be? It's summed up by Paul when he says, in First Corinthians 12:31, "earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way."

The more excellent way is to walk in love towards others, described so masterfully in First Corinthians Thirteen! Determine to walk in love and you will desire the gift or gifts that will most help you share God's love with others.

Gifts are not the goal; they are the gateway. They are the gateway to revealing the presence and love of Jesus to His people, the Church. Determine to walk in love and you will discover your gifts.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Part 4 - First Corinthians 12d

Introduction

In order to accomplish His work on the earth in the first century, Jesus was incarnate in a single human body.

In order to accomplish His work on the earth in the following centuries, Jesus is incarnate in *another* human "body." In First Corinthians 12:27 Paul says,

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now **you** are the body of Christ, and members individually.

The Church is to be regarded as the body of Jesus on the earth today. It's not going beyond Scripture at all to say that Jesus is incarnate on the earth today through **you** - His body of believers.

Paul uses the word "body" eighteen times in fourteen verses in this chapter. He intends for us to fully grasp the awesome truth that Jesus considers **you** His body on the earth today.

You understand how your own physical body should operate. Your head directs your movements and activities so that there is a cooperation and a coordination between all of the various individual members that comprise your one body.

The same ought to be true of you as the body of Jesus on the earth today. Jesus is the head, and you are the body:

Ephesians 1:22 "[Jesus is]...head over all things to the church,
Ephesians 1:23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

The Head directs your movements and activities so that there is a cooperation and a coordination between all of the various individual members that comprise the one body of Jesus on the earth today.

This wonderful direction and movement is accomplished by the Holy Spirit and His gifts. When Jesus directs us by the Spirit we move and act according to His will and Jesus is incarnate in the world through us.

There are times, however, when our movement as a body is neither cooperative nor coordinated! We have disagreements that cripple our activities; we have divisions that sever our members. The problem can't be with the Head, or with the Spirit by which He makes His will known to us. The problem must be with us - *the body!*

And the problem often is precisely that we fail to understand that each of us is an individual member of a unified body! Our own unique, individual functions must remain subordinate to the overall direction and movement of the whole body.

Paul looks at the body of Jesus on earth today from these two perspectives - your unity and your individuality. In verses twelve through nineteen he stresses the unity of the body, saying "the body is **one** and has many members." In verses twenty through thirty-one he stresses the individuality of the members, saying "now indeed there are **many members**, yet one body." His desire is that we realize that our own unique, individual functions must remain subordinate to the overall direction and movement of the whole body.

#1 Jesus Is Incarnate In The World
Today Through You - His One
Body That Has Many Members
(v12-19)

The unity of the body is the starting point:

1 Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

Look at your own physical body. It is one body. It is comprised of many members - cells, tissues, organs, and systems - but it is one, unified body. The same is true of the body of Jesus on the earth today. It is comprised of many individual members, but it is one, unified body.

How can we who are individual and many really be one? We are one body because of the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

We are one because of the indwelling Holy Spirit Who unites us one with another. Our individual *physical* differences - ethnic, cultural, social, religious, gender, or otherwise - no longer separate us. We are all connected *spiritually* as we all have the same Holy Spirit indwelling us, connecting us to the Head, Jesus Christ.

This verse, verse thirteen, has caused a great deal of difficulty and disagreement among believers. It uses the phrase, "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." As the saying goes, "*Them is fightin' words!*"

We believe and teach that there is a valid and Scriptural experience that can be called the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It is a separate experience from salvation - an experience with the Holy Spirit that empowers you for service. We teach that the Holy Spirit comes *in* you at salvation, then *upon* you for service. Others

in the body of Christ dispute this further "upon" experience, claiming that the moment you are saved you receive the Holy Spirit in His fullness. This verse, verse thirteen, is a key proof text for them. They say it teaches that the baptism with the Spirit occurs at the moment of salvation and that there is no further experience to be expected or desired. Let me try to address this.

In verse thirteen, the Holy Spirit baptizes you into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the baptizer; the body of Christ is what you are baptized into; the issue is salvation. When we speak of the Holy Spirit coming "upon" you, then it is Jesus Who baptizes you with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the baptizer; the power of the Holy Spirit is what you are baptized into, the issue is service. The baptism *by* the Spirit referred to in verse thirteen is very different from the baptism *with* the Spirit Jesus promises you. One is unto *salvation*; the other is unto *service*. In one, the Spirit comes *in* you; in the other, the Spirit comes *upon* you. They are two different experiences.

Just so you understand that he is describing the Spirit's work in salvation, Paul puts the same truth another way. Greek scholar Gordon Fee points out that verse thirteen is what is called a parallelism. There are two phrases that parallel each other; two phrases that both mean exactly the same thing. The two phrases are "we were all baptized into one body," and, "[we] have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

What happens when you take a drink of water? The water comes *inside* you. When Paul says "[we] have all been made to drink into one Spirit," he means that, when you were saved, the Holy Spirit came *inside* you; you were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That is how he intends us to understand his use of the word "baptized" in this same verse! He is simply saying that, when you became a Christian, the Holy Spirit came *in* you.

Paul's point here is that we are all connected *spiritually* because we all have the same Holy Spirit indwelling us. He makes this important point to correct an error in your thinking, described in verse fourteen through seventeen:

1 Corinthians 12:14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

1 Corinthians 12:15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?

1 Corinthians 12:16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?

1 Corinthians 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?

You have a tendency to minimize your individual contributions to the body of Jesus because you perceive your gifts to be insignificant. You think that the Church can do without you. That is a terrible error in your thinking! The one body is made up of all its members properly functioning together to perform the will of the Head. When you truly understand the unity of the body of Jesus, you see your individual contribution in its proper perspective.

1 Corinthians 12:18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

1 Corinthians 12:19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

God makes no mistakes. His design for the body of Jesus on earth today is perfect. He gave you your unique talents and abilities; He gives you His gifts as He sees fit and as it pleases Him. Together we form a coordinated, cooperating body - one body with its many members.

I can't stress enough that you are a necessary and vital member of the body of Jesus on the earth. That's what Jesus says of you through Paul's writings. If you think otherwise, you are wrong!

Not everyone thinks that the Church can do without them; some think that they can do without others in the Church! You *are* a unique individual, but you cannot function on your own. Paul addresses this error in the remaining verses by taking a proper look at your individuality.

#2 Jesus Is Incarnate In The World Today Through You - The Many Members Of His One Body (v20-31)

Your individuality can only truly be understood in the context of your connection with others in the one body. As Paul says in verse twenty,

1 Corinthians 12:20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.

Many Christians are out of regular fellowship with their local church. It is almost epidemic. It is simply unScriptural. Can a member of your physical body survive if it is detached from the rest of your body? It can possibly be preserved; but it cannot be living and functioning properly, and the body it is detached from suffers its loss. A Christian who detaches him or her self from fellowship in a local church can possibly be preserved; but they cannot be living and functioning properly, and the body they are detached from suffers from their loss.

If you are in regular fellowship, another problem can arise from your individuality. At Corinth the problem wasn't so much that the believers were out of fellowship as it was that, while they were together fellowshiping, some of the members had feelings of superiority because of their particular gift or gifts. Their gift or gifts seemed more important.

Are some gifts more important than others? I am tempted to say "Yes," until I read Paul's next comments:

1 Corinthians 12:21 And 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."

Is your hand more important than your eye? You can still see without a hand; but the loss or lack of a hand is a nevertheless a handicap that affects the whole body. It is immature to think of some part of Jesus Christ's body as less important than another.

Paul takes his comments a step further. He divides the human body into four parts: the weaker parts, the less honorable parts, the unrepresentable parts, and the representable parts:

1 Corinthians 12:22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

1 Corinthians 12:23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty,

1 Corinthians 12:24 but our representable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,

The "weaker" parts of your body are the vital internal organs that have to be protected by the skeleton. The "less honorable" parts of our body refer to the torso. Our "unrepresentable parts" refer to our unrepresentable parts!!

Our "representable parts" are our head, arms, hands, legs, and feet.

We normally think of our representable parts as superior to the rest of our body. Yet in a sense we treat the rest of our body as if it were superior to our representable parts! Our representable parts are left exposed, but the other parts we clothe. That's because we know that the rest of our body is vital and necessary to the function of our head, arms, hands, legs, and feet.

This should be your attitude in the body of Jesus, too. The "representable parts" would be those who minister in the more obvious ways. We normally think of them as superior; but we ought to realize that the rest of the body is vital and necessary to their function. If there are weaker, less honorable, or more unrepresentable ministries, we should never think them inferior or ourselves as superior.

This proper perspective on individuality promotes cooperation and coordination in the body of Jesus on earth:

1 Corinthians 12:25 ...there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

1 Corinthians 12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

We are one body, even though many individual members. We care for one another; we suffer together; we rejoice together.

How does it all come together? Paul gives us a look at a coordinated, cooperating body of believers:

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

There is one body, comprised of many individual members, who are given gifts as the Holy Spirit determines, so that Jesus is once again incarnate on the earth through the ministries of the Church.

There is a natural order to Paul's list of these particular gifts:

First, gifted men establish the Church - men like the "apostles" and "prophets."

Next, a gifted man or men equip the Church - men who are "teachers."

Then, gifts edify the life of the Church. The list includes sign gifts, serving gifts, and speaking gifts that are available to you as individual believers.

This is still the pattern today. A local church is established, by the leading of God; a gifted man or men are given to the church to equip the believers; the believers are given gifts to edify one another. Jesus is incarnate through His body on the earth.

Again I must strongly point out that all of this absolutely assumes each and every believer will be involved in a local fellowship. That's not a rebuke to most of you; you are here, you are involved. But increasingly more and more believers feel that fellowship in a local church is unimportant or unnecessary. **They are wrong!** They are individuals, yes; but only in the sense that an arm is an individual member of the body which gives it life and which it is intended to serve.

Our fellowship was established by gifted men by the direct leading of God. God has given us gifted men to equip the believers. God has given or wants to give **you** gifts to edify one another. You *are* the body of Jesus, and members individually!

What gift or gifts does the Holy Spirit bestow? All those that He sees fit to:

1 Corinthians 12:29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?

1 Corinthians 12:30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

These questions demand a "No" answer. "Are all apostles?" "No." "Are all prophets?" "No." "Are all teachers?" "No." "Are all workers of miracles?" "No." "Do all have gifts of healings?" "No." "Do all speak with tongues?" "No." "Do all interpret?" "No."

God is the one who determines the movements and activities of the local church. He does it by distributing those gifts that He sees are best in that city, in that congregation.

Conclusion

We are a unique part of the body of Jesus, and **you** are a vital and important member. As we follow the will of the Head by the empowering of the Spirit, Jesus is incarnate on the earth.

In order to accomplish His work on the earth in the first century, Jesus had a body made of flesh and blood. In order to accomplish His work today, Jesus has another "body" - the Church, living human believers, *you and I* - "the body of Christ, and members individually."

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Part 5 - First Corinthians 13

Introduction

Agapë.

One of the Greek words for "love" in the New Testament is agapë. The word was not in common use previous to the writing of the New Testament. The love of God for mankind, seen in and through Jesus Christ, required a new word to describe it. Agapë is love that wills to initiate a relationship and show kindness and self-sacrifice regardless of whether the other person or people are worthy, deserving, or even likable. It is supernatural love that completely transcends all human ideas, ideals, experiences or expressions of love. It is a word that summarizes God's words and works throughout history to bring mankind salvation by grace through faith.

The attitudes and actions of Jesus on the earth in the first century revealed God's agapë. As He went about in His earthly body ministering the Good News of salvation in God's agapë, the world could recognize Him as God's Son and their Savior.

Today Jesus is in heaven, but He is not without an earthly "body." As we saw in First Corinthians 12:27, "Now you are the body of Christ..." on the earth today. The attitude and actions of Christians on the earth in this century reveal God's agapë. As we go about as the earthly body of Christ ministering the Good News of salvation in God's agapë, the world can once again recognize Jesus as God's Son and their Savior.

That is, they can recognize Jesus *when and if* we go about in God's agapë! Unlike Jesus, you and I can minister to others *with* or *without* God's agapë. The with or without of love in our ministering is the difference between people being able to see Jesus or being hindered from seeing Jesus.

Paul has been discussing how we minister one to another through the exercise of the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit bestows upon us as individual members of Jesus Christ's one body. He has told us that the exercise of your spiritual gifts are one way that Jesus is revealed on the earth today. But the exercise of your spiritual gifts by themselves is not enough. Your spiritual gifts can be exercised with or without love. When exercised without love, your spiritual gifts only draw attention to yourself and away from your Savior; when exercised with love, your spiritual gifts always draw attention to your Savior and away from yourself.

- #1 When Exercised Without Love, Your Spiritual Gifts Only Draw Attention To Yourself And Away From Your Savior (v1-3)

In Corinth the believers were exercising their gifts in ways that called attention to themselves. To illustrate this, Paul compares individual believers to the instruments of a symphony orchestra being conducted by a great Master conductor. In verse one he says,

1 Corinthians 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

The "sounding brass" is what we would call a *gong*. The gong and the cymbal are two important percussion instruments which have their proper and necessary place in the symphony orchestra. Think of them, though, when played out of place; they distract from the conductor's presentation of the musical score, and they inevitably call attention to themselves.

Your exercise of spiritual gifts is like the playing of a symphony orchestra being conducted by a great Master conductor. You each have your necessary and proper place in the symphony. But you can exercise your gift or gifts in such a way as to call attention to yourself and away from your conductor; you can be like a gong or a cymbal being played out of place. It happens when you lack love in your Christian walk.

1 Corinthians 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

1 Corinthians 13:2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

It is only too possible to be spiritually gifted and still lack love. The tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, benevolence, and martyrdom mentioned are valid spiritual enablements. Paul describes them in their most spectacular and sensational manifestations to show that even the greatest spiritual enablements cannot overcome the lack of love in the fellowship of believers. When you draw attention to yourself and away from your Savior, you are "nothing" and "it profits [you] nothing." In other words, there is no real spiritual impact on others or spiritual inheritance for yourself.

It is helpful to see these verses in the context of the Corinthian Church. They had all the spiritual gifts, but they were not exercising them in love. Paul said of them, in 1:4-5,

1 Corinthians 1:4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus,

1 Corinthians 1:5 that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge,

In verse seven of chapter one he adds, "...you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

There was no lacking in spiritual gifts in Corinth, but there was a lacking in love in Corinth:

There were divisions among them. Some of their members preferred Apollos, some Peter, some Paul.

They were tolerating gross immorality in the Church assembly. There was a man, a professed believer, openly living in sexual sin with his father's wife.

The members of the Church were suing one another in open court.

The members of the Church were divorcing one another without biblical grounds.

They were conducting themselves with gluttony at the love feast preceding communion and with drunkenness at the communion table.

Besides lacking love towards one another in general, they lacked love in the exercise of their spiritual gifts:

They would all speak in tongues at once, making it impossible for each other to be truly edified.

They often interrupted one another if someone felt he had received a prophecy while someone else was speaking.

They didn't interpret their speaking in tongues, even though unbelievers might be present who would be confused by the lack of understanding.

As they exercised their gifts they were only drawing attention to themselves. You can't draw attention to Jesus and to yourself at the same time; it has to be one or the other. If the attention is on self and not on the Savior, it accomplishes nothing, and it is detrimental to the goal of revealing the presence of Jesus on the earth.

You could easily identify the lack of love in Corinth. How could you identify the presence of love? Paul tells you in the remaining verses.

#2 When Exercised With Love, Your Spiritual Gifts Always Draw Attention To Your Savior And Away From Yourself (v4-13)

Let's agree right now that these next few verses cannot be improved upon by commentary. Talking about them is like dissecting a flower; you know something about the parts, but you've ruined the beauty of the flower.

The very best way to understand verses four through six is to perform two simple exercises:

First, everywhere you see the word "love" put in the name "Jesus." These verses describe Jesus. They are a summary of how Jesus ministered so that you would understand the love of God for you.

Next, everywhere you see the word "love" ***put in your name!*** These are the qualities that should describe your ministering to others, so that others can again understand the love of God for them.

Don't be discouraged. We all fall short. But God can produce these qualities in our lives. He promised us in Romans 5:5 that "...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." It is by the Holy Spirit that you produce these qualities. They are the fruit of the Spirit that is produced as we abide in Jesus and yield to the indwelling Holy Spirit day by day in our Christian walk. They describe the person you are becoming as you walk in obedience and humility with Jesus in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Love may be difficult to define; it is not hard to discern. Paul pictures love in action. In the Greek language these words describing love are all verbs; they are all present tense, continuous action verbs. Love is a verb. Love is something you do or don't do. God's agapē involves attitudes and actions, *not* affections.

Here is what you do and don't do:

- 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;
- 1 Corinthians 13:5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;
- 1 Corinthians 13:6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;
- 1 Corinthians 13:7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

God's agapē affects your attitudes and actions in three areas: *Inward, outward, and upward.*

God's Agapē Affects Your Inward Attitudes And Actions:

- 1 Corinthians 13:4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;
- 1 Corinthians 13:5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own...

These words describe the inward affect of love.

"Love suffers long and is kind" - You are patient in enduring injury from others and active in conferring good toward them. You do not give place to bitterness or wrath; it harbors no resentment.

"Love does not envy" - You don't begrudge others their success, don't enter into rivalries.

"Love does not parade itself" - You are never anxious to be on display.

"[Love] is not puffed up" - You aren't smug in your superior knowledge or position.

"[Love] does not behave rudely" - You are genuinely sympathetic towards the feelings of others and, so, will not wound, distress or embarrass others.

"[Love] does not seek its own" - You don't feel the need to insist on your rights.

The Corinthians provide a good bad example:

They were impatient: They interrupted one another.

They were unkind: They hoarded their own food at the love feast.

They were envious of one another's gifts.

In their meetings they "paraded themselves": They put their gifts on display.

They were puffed-up spiritually: They divided into factions over who was the more knowledgeable teacher - Apollos, Peter, or Paul.

They behaved rudely: They got drunk at the communion table.

They sought their own: They were suing one another.

In God's agapē there is no place for these attitudes and actions. These are characteristics of our old, sin nature. The love of God shed abroad in your hearts affects these inward attitudes and their corresponding actions.

God's Agapē Affects Your Outward Attitudes And Actions:

1 Corinthians 13:5 [love] is not provoked, thinks no evil;

1 Corinthians 13:6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

These words have to do with how you react towards others. Paul mentions three ways in which we allow the weaknesses, sins, and failures of others to overcome God's love that is shed abroad in our hearts.

First, people can "provoke" us. They arouse us to anger; we get in the flesh because of what they say and do. We then blame them for our reaction! Instead, God's agapè guards against being irritated, upset, or angered by the things done and said against it.

Second, Paul refers to "thinking evil" of others. It's a bookkeeping term that means "to keep a record." We keep a record of the wrongs people commit against us. God's agapè is ready to forgive, and to practice forgiveness by keeping no such records.

Thirdly, when others sin, we have a tendency to "rejoice" that they have fallen; it makes us seem better somehow. This is what fuels the gossip columns and magazines. God's agapè "rejoices in the truth," rejecting gossip and slander.

God's Agapè Affects Your Upward Attitudes And Actions:

1 Corinthians 13:7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

The phrase "all things" describes your walk with the Lord. As Paul says in Romans, "all things work together for good to those that love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." In the world you will have tribulation. There are burdens to shoulder - your own, and those of others. There is suffering and affliction along your path toward home. All this can affect your upward attitude towards God, which, in turn, affects your activities for God. Here Paul tells you that God's agapè strengthens you to bear, believe, hope, and endure. God's agapè enables you to exercise a strong assurance that "all things work together for good to those that love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Whatever happens, God's agapè assures you that "all thing" concerning you are in the plan and purpose of God.

Spiritual gifts had become the focus of the church at Corinth. When spiritual gifts become your focus there is a tendency to get your eyes onto yourself and off of Jesus. Gifts have their proper place; they are an important part of the Christian experience, but they should be governed by love.

To emphasize that spiritual gifts should be kept in their proper place, Paul discusses their temporary place in the eternal plan of God:

1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

1 Corinthians 13:9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

1 Corinthians 13:10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

Spiritual gifts will one day cease! They are not permanent. They have their place on earth today, but they will be unnecessary in heaven.

"That which is perfect" is being in heaven with Jesus. In heaven with Jesus it should be obvious that there will be no need for prophecies, for tongues, or for the word of knowledge. These gifts of the Spirit are needed today to help manifest the presence of Jesus on the earth. In heaven He will be present! His presence will be manifest everywhere.

You will see Jesus in eternity. You should want others to see Jesus on earth. Don't let your lack of love obscure the view people have of Jesus as they see His body on earth.

Paul looks forward to heaven:

1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Paul was perhaps thinking of his bar mitzvah. One moment Paul was still considered a boy; the next he was considered a man. We will have a spiritual bar mitzvah when we go to be with the Lord! Whether through death and resurrection or the Rapture, we will be immediately matured. Then we will put spiritual gifts away, the way a child one day leaves childlike things behind for adulthood.

As we look forward to heaven we ought to put the priority on love, not gifts, since love will endure forever and gifts won't.

1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

The mirrors in those days were crude, made of beaten and polished metal. That's how we see Jesus - only partially, by faith. In heaven we will see Him face to face. And we will know Him perfectly, even as He knows us perfectly today.

As we look forward to heaven we ought to put the priority on love, not gifts, since it is Jesus we want others to see and not ourselves.

1 Corinthians 13:13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Faith will become sight, and hope will be fulfilled, in heaven. Love will go on forever.

Spiritual gifts are important; they have their place in manifesting Jesus in the world today. But they must operate in an atmosphere of love to be effective. Without love, they only draw attention to you; with love, they always draw attention to Jesus.

Conclusion

Your personal application of chapter thirteen is found in the opening words of chapter fourteen, where Paul says, "pursue love." *Pursue* is an action word. G. Campbell Morgan says of it,

"It is a strenuous word. It shows the necessity for dedication, consecration, effort, persistent vigil."¹⁰

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he said that he formerly "persecuted" the church, but now he was "pressing on" towards the prize as a believer. The same Greek word is translated "persecuted" and "pressing on." It is a word of passionate dedication.

It is the same word translated "pursue" when Paul says "pursue love." You are to be passionately, zealously, dedicated to pressing on in love.

¹⁰*The Corinthian Letters of Paul*, p. 166.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Part 6 – First Corinthians 14a

Introduction

When believers come together to worship the Lord they experience the Lord's presence through spirit anointed speech. Paul lists examples of spirit anointed speech in verse twenty-six:

1 Corinthians 14:26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation...

All of these speaking gifts were being exercised by the believers in Corinth. But there were problems with their exercise of spirit anointed speech:

All of them were speaking in tongues at once, and there was no interpretation.

Those with the gift of prophecy were interrupting one another during the service.

The women were speaking out of turn in a way that caused disruptions and distractions.

Instead of experiencing the Lord's presence through spirit anointed speech, their meetings were a cause of reproach, both to "uninformed" believers and to "unbelievers," who accused them of being insane.

Paul gives them a principle to govern the exercise of their gifts. At the end of verse twenty-six he says, "Let all things be done for edification." "Edify" means *to build up*. You should only and always exercise your gifts in ways that encourage the spiritual growth and progress of others in the assembly. This is such an important spiritual principle that Paul uses the word "edify" in one form or another six times in this chapter, and it is implied in everything he says even when he is not using the word.

Your spirit anointed speech, when exercised in the assembly, is intended to encourage the spiritual growth and progress of the others who are present. That's the principle. How, exactly, do you apply the principle?

Paul gives you two ways to apply the edification principle in the meetings of the church. He says, #1 Your Spirit Anointed Speech Can Only Be Profitable For Edifying Others If It Is Understood, and #2 Your Spirit Anointed Speech Can Only Be Practical In Edifying Others If It Is Under Control

We're going to take two weeks to study chapter fourteen. This morning we will look at how your Spirit anointed speech can only be profitable for edifying others if it is understood.

#1 Your Spirit Anointed Speech Can
Only Be Profitable For Edifying
Others If It Is Understood
(v1-25)

In verse six Paul asks, "What shall I profit you?" by spirit anointed speech. The answer is a word he uses nine times in this chapter in various forms: *Understood, understand, understanding*. In the assembly of the church, you must only and always speak with understanding in order to profit others.

The Corinthians had lost sight of edifying others in their meetings. They spoke without understanding; others could not profit by their Spirit anointed speech and, thus, they were not edifying others.

Uninterpreted tongues were a major problem. Paul uses their practice of speaking with uninterpreted tongues as a prime example of what was wrong with their meetings.

1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

Prophecy is a supernaturally inspired and anointed utterance conveying what is on the mind and heart of God; it is speaking forth the Word of God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It can be a foretelling of the future, but most often it is a *forthtelling* of God's Word. It's exercise brings edification, exhortation, and comfort to the believers.

Prophecy can be exercised in a variety of ways:

One of the most common and overlooked ways prophecy is exercised is by the Holy Spirit calling your attention to a particular text or context of Scripture.

Another way the gift of prophecy often operates is in conjunction with the gift of teaching. As the teacher shares on Scripture, he is directed to say certain things that have a supernatural impact on the hearers. =Another way prophecy is exercised is by the Holy Spirit putting words into your mind and mouth.

Dreams can be prophetic; then as you share the dream, you are exercising the gift of prophecy.

Visions can be prophetic. These are not your own visualizations, but pictures that the Holy Spirit flashes into your mind.

Regardless how it is received, if the prophecy is shared in the assembly, it is Spirit anointed speech that can be understood by everyone. It is a message from God for His people.

The gift of tongues is different:

1 Corinthians 14:2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

The gift of tongues is the supernatural enablement to worship God through prayer and praise in a known or unknown language you have not naturally learned. Paul very clearly and unmistakably says that tongues is speaking *to* God, **not** to men. It is never a message from God for men. Thus, if you speak in tongues in the assembly, "no one understands" you. By definition, tongues **by itself** cannot edify other believers since your words are a "mystery" to them.

1 Corinthians 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

1 Corinthians 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.

According to verse three, prophecy edifies others. According to verse four, uninterpreted tongues edifies the one who speaks in tongues, but not the others who hear it. That's why, in verse five, Paul encourages you to speak in uninterpreted tongues for your personal edification, but he discourages you from speaking in uninterpreted tongues for public edification:

1 Corinthians 14:5 I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

Paul clarifies what he is saying at the end of verse five, saying, "unless he interprets, that the church may receive edification." The interpretation of tongues is obviously a companion gift to tongues. The interpretation of tongues is the Holy Spirit giving you the understanding of tongues spoken by someone else or by yourself even though you don't know the language. And it is an interpretation, *not* a translation. Translation is a word-for-word transfer from one language to another. Interpretation is something that goes farther, explaining the meaning regardless the particular words spoken. The words are not as important in an interpretation as are the concepts being expressed.

Don't miss this point: In the assembly, uninterpreted tongues *does not* edify others, but interpreted tongues *does* edify others. The problem in Corinth wasn't their speaking in tongues; it was their failure to wait upon God for the interpretation of tongues so that all could be edified at their Spirit anointed speech.

As we go on in this chapter, keep in mind the spiritual principle Paul is establishing: Your spirit anointed speech, when exercised in the assembly, is intended to encourage the spiritual growth and progress of the others who are present.

1 Corinthians 14:6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?

1 Corinthians 14:7 Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played?

1 Corinthians 14:8 For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

1 Corinthians 14:9 So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.

You cannot edify others unless they understand what is being said. There must be a distinction between the sounds in order for sounds to be of any value to the hearer. Musical instruments must make distinct sounds in order for you to understand the song being played; a military trumpet must make distinct sounds if you are to understand the order being given.

1 Corinthians 14:10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance.

1 Corinthians 14:11 Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me.

1 Corinthians 14:12 Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

Paul says it again: You cannot edify others unless they understand what is being said. That being true, when you are assembled together with others, your gift of tongues needs the corresponding gift of interpretation:

1 Corinthians 14:13 Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

1 Corinthians 14:14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

1 Corinthians 14:15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

1 Corinthians 14:16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

1 Corinthians 14:17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

Paul mentions singing in tongues as a valid exercise of the gift of tongues. Whether you speak in tongues or sing in tongues, it needs to be interpreted. It is not enough that the Spirit seems to be anointing someone's speech. As wonderful as we might think it is to simply hear an utterance in tongues, Paul says it does not and can not build us up unless we also understand the prayer and praise that is being offered to God. With the interpretation, speaking or singing in tongues *does* edify. That must always be the goal of Spirit anointed speech in the assembly: To further others along in their spiritual growth and progress.

These rules about uninterpreted tongues in public are not applicable to your own private exercise of the gift of tongues. There is no need for interpretation when you are alone, speaking prayer and praise to God. Some who speak in tongues *can* interpret their own speaking; but Paul never says it is necessary to interpret to make your private use of the gift valid.

I want also to re-emphasize something we've said before: Tongues is **not** a gift for every believer. It is not the sign that you are a Christian; it is not the sign that you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit; it is not even a sign of spiritual maturity. It is a gift that is distributed to some members of the body of Christ according to the will of the Holy Spirit.

You can't learn how to speak in tongues; no one can help you learn how to do it by giving you certain words to release your faith. It must be given to you.

How do you get it if it is given to you? God will show you!

1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;
1 Corinthians 14:19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Paul had the gift of tongues. He is not talking about a learned ability to speak various known languages; he is talking about the supernatural gift of speaking in a language unknown to himself, a language of prayer and praise to God. He exercised the gift even more than the Corinthians - *but not in church*. In church he would rather speak words others understood so that they might be edified.

To finish out his instruction to the Corinthians regarding uninterpreted tongues, Paul addressed their habit of all speaking in tongues at once during their meetings. It was bad enough that they didn't wait for an interpretation; it was even worse that they all spoke at once.

1 Corinthians 14:20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.
1 Corinthians 14:21 In the law it is written: "With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me," says the Lord.
1 Corinthians 14:22 Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.
1 Corinthians 14:23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

These verses are admittedly somewhat confusing. Paul tells you that tongues are a sign to unbelievers, but then he tells you that if the church is gathered and everyone is speaking in tongues the unbeliever will think you are insane! Here is what I believe Paul is saying:

The key is to remember that Paul is talking about uninterpreted tongues. If everyone is simultaneously speaking in uninterpreted tongues, it is a "sign" to unbelievers. What is it a sign of? The quote in verse twenty-one is from Isaiah 28:11-12. In Isaiah twenty-eight God is chastising His people. Since they would not heed the clearly understood word of God, He brought them into captivity. The Assyrians captured them and spoke to them in their own Assyrian language, with words that God's people could not understand. God had spoken to them

with words they could understand, but they rejected His words and, so, He brought them under the control of a people whose speech they could not understand.

When you are being spoken to in words you cannot understand it is a "sign" of God's judgment. Whenever God quits speaking to His people in ways that they can understand and instead speaks to them in ways that they cannot understand it is a "sign" of God's displeasure and discipline for His people.

Apply this to the church at Corinth. Since everyone was speaking with uninterpreted tongues, people visiting the church concluded that there was something wrong with them since God wasn't speaking clearly to them in ways they could understand. It was a sign to them of God's judgment.

The Corinthians thought that their speaking in uninterpreted tongues was a sign of spiritual maturity; it was a sign of spiritual immaturity at its worst. In fact, Paul calls it spiritual "malice" since it actually hindered others in their spiritual growth and progress. Those who were "uninformed" - new believers - and "unbelievers" who came to church were hindered from understanding the Word of God.

They ought rather to speak with understanding in their assemblies:

1 Corinthians 14:24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all.

1 Corinthians 14:25 And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

When you speak with Spirit anointed speech that others *can* understand God empowers your words to affect others in their very heart and soul. Their spiritual eyes are opened so that they can make a decision for Jesus.

Conclusion

We discourage speaking in tongues and interpretation on Sunday mornings; in fact, we don't allow it at all. We encourage speaking in tongues and interpretation at smaller meetings - like the home fellowships. And we encourage your private use of tongues, with or without interpretation.

Is that Scriptural? *It is!* On Sunday mornings there are too many people who fall into the category of "unbelievers" or the "uninformed." We want to edify them. We want to move them along either toward a relationship with Jesus or in their relationship with Jesus. We are like Paul; in the church assembly we would rather speak five words everyone can understand that we may **teach** others than ten thousand words in a tongue. We design our Sunday morning services to emphasize the teaching of God's Word.

Love must control our exercise of all the gifts, including tongues and prophecy. Discouraging speaking in tongues on Sunday mornings seems to be the most loving thing we can do! It takes into account the greatest need we all have: To understand the Word of God. It is true that prophecy and interpreted tongues can be understood and do edify. But in a large group we can't always tell if the person who shares a prophecy or an interpreted tongue is genuine or a counterfeit. That kind of oversight is better exercised in a smaller group setting.

We will see some of these rules for the practice of the speaking gifts next Sunday in verses twenty-six through forty. For now we would encourage you who speak in tongues to exercise it privately; to exercise it publicly in smaller groups, when you are convinced someone is there who has the gift of interpretation. And we would ask you to speak to yourself and to God on Sunday mornings - keeping your gift of tongues under control so that everyone can be edified by words that can be understood.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Part 7 - First Corinthians 14b

Introduction

If you feel prompted to speak in tongues in a meeting of the church, should you do so?

The correct answer is *Maybe!* Maybe you should; maybe you shouldn't. It depends on several things:

Is there someone who will interpret so everyone can understand and be edified?

Have two or three others already spoken in tongues?

Is there a time during the assembly when you can speak "in turn," that is, without interrupting the purpose of the gathering?

If you feel prompted to prophesy in a meeting of the church, should you do so?

The correct answer is *Maybe!* Maybe you should; maybe you shouldn't. It depends on several things:

Have two or three others already exercised their gift of prophecy?

Are you willing to submit to the judgment of the believers present, especially the leadership?

Behind these cautions is a fundamental biblical principle that governs your exercise of the gifts in meetings of the church: **Your Spirit anointed speech must be under control.**

Many Christians would take issue with the use of the word "control" in the same sentence with the Holy Spirit. They would call the effort to be under control a quenching of the activity of the Spirit among believers.

But that is not what the Apostle Paul would call it! Everything that Paul says throughout chapter fourteen absolutely assumes that you maintain a proper and biblical measure of control over your exercise of the gifts of the Spirit. He says it most plainly in verse thirty-two,

1 Corinthians 14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

The NIV Bible better translates this verse, "the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets." When you exercise your gifts, even though you are receiving a supernatural impulse or impression, you remain in control of yourself.

The Holy Spirit does not overrule your will; rather, He solicits your willing cooperation.

You can and should submit to rules of proper conduct in the public assembly; all things can and should be done decently and orderly.

Last week we saw that the goal of the gifts was to edify, or build up, others in the church. In verses one through twenty-five we learned that your Spirit anointed speech can only be profitable in edifying others if it is understood. In verses twenty-six through forty you learn that your Spirit anointed speech can only be practical in edifying others if it is under control.

1 Corinthians 14:26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

Christians meet together in different settings. They meet together in small groups in various homes, and the various small home groups meet together in a larger setting. That was the pattern in Corinth. There were various home groups, or house churches, which came together on Sunday's in a larger setting. In verse twenty-three Paul described the larger group meeting when he said "therefore if the whole church comes together in one place." In verse twenty-six he is probably *not* describing the "whole church" assembling together in one place; he is probably describing the various smaller house church assemblies.

Last week I told you that we discourage - actually, we disallow - speaking in tongues when the whole church assembles together in one place on Sunday mornings. We encourage speaking in tongues with an interpretation in the smaller meetings - such as our home fellowships. It is perfectly Scriptural to do so. The Bible makes such distinctions between the types of meetings the church promotes, and the activities permitted at the different meetings.

In the meetings Paul is describing everyone has an opportunity to participate in Spirit anointed speech: In singing, in teaching, in speaking in tongues, in interpreting tongues, in prophecy. You don't have to participate, but you can participate as the Lord so gifts you to do so. If you participate it is not for your own enjoyment; it is for others edification.

When you participate there are rules of order regarding how you are to conduct yourself since you remain under your own control. Paul gives rules for speaking in tongues in verses twenty-seven and twenty-eight.

1 Corinthians 14:27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret.

1 Corinthians 14:28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.

For those of you who missed the previous studies, let me define the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues. The gift of tongues is the supernatural enablement to worship God through prayer and praise in a known or unknown language you have not naturally learned. Tongues is speaking *to* God, **not** to men. It is never a message *from* God *for* men. The interpretation of tongues is obviously a companion gift to tongues. The interpretation of tongues is the Holy Spirit giving you the understanding of tongues spoken by someone else or by yourself even though you don't know the language. And it is an interpretation, *not* a translation. Translation is a word-for-word transfer from one language to another. Interpretation is something that goes farther, explaining the meaning regardless the particular words spoken. The words are not as important in an interpretation as are the concepts being expressed.

The gift of tongues is not uncontrollable. You can choose to use it or not to use it; you can choose to use it in private or in public; you can choose to keep it silent and private even in public.

Here, then, are the basic rules governing the exercise of the gift of tongues:

Rule #1

"Let there be two or at the most three" - Speaking in tongues should not dominate a meeting. Two or three people might be allowed to speak in tongues to the whole group, and that's all.

Rule #2

"Each in turn" - There is to be no multiple speaking or singing in tongues; only one person at a time should be exercising the gift of tongues.

Rule #3

"If there is no interpreter...keep silent" - You must be concerned with there being an interpretation of the utterance in tongues since uninterpreted tongues cannot edify others. If, for example, there is an utterance in tongues that goes uninterpreted, that's a pretty good indication that there should be no further exercise of the gift in that meeting.

Rule #4

Look at verse two of chapter fourteen:

1 Corinthians 14:2 For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

The interpretation of a tongue will always be prayer and praise *from* men *to* God. It will never be a message *from* God *to* men.

How is this practiced? You are in a small group meeting of believers. The leader of the meeting indicates to you whether or not it would be appropriate to have a time of prayer and praise during which the gift of tongues and the interpretation

of tongues could be exercised. As the group prays and praises, you are prompted to speak in tongues! You might already know someone there who has the gift of interpretation. If so, you can be somewhat comfortable in speaking or singing in tongues.

What if you're not sure if someone there has the gift of interpretation? You might simply share with the leader of the group that you feel God prompting you to speak in tongues. Perhaps he knows if someone is there who can interpret. Or, he might feel that God wants to give someone the gift of interpretation as they hear your tongues being spoken. He will instruct you what to do.

That brings up an interesting point that is rarely considered. God may genuinely prompt you to speak or sing in tongues. You obey God, following the kind of procedures I've just outlined. But there is no interpretation! What happened?

It's possible God wasn't really prompting you at all! But it is also possible that there was someone there with the interpretation, but that they lacked the faith to share it!

Here is something else to consider:

The interpretation need not come immediately on the heels of the utterance in tongues. It can come later in the meeting. In other words, you don't have to just stop everything and wait for the interpretation. Trust God to give it to someone as you continue to pray and praise.

I would add to this the exhortation that the leader of the group explain everything that is going on...

Rules are good. The rules for tongues and the interpretation of tongues are good. They allow interpreted tongues to be a gift that edifies others.

Paul next turns your attention to the gift of prophecy. Prophecy is a supernaturally inspired and anointed utterance conveying what is on the mind and heart of God; it is speaking forth the Word of God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It can be a foretelling of the future, but most often it is a *forthtelling* of God's Word. It's exercise brings edification, exhortation, and comfort to the believers.

How is this practiced? You are in a small group meeting of believers. The leader of the meeting indicates to you whether or not it would be appropriate to have a time of prayer and praise during which the gift of prophecy could be exercised. As the group prays and praises, you receive a word of prophecy!

There are rules for the exercise of the gift of prophecy:

Rule #1

1 Corinthians 14:29 Let two or three prophets speak...

Prophecy should not be allowed to dominate the meeting. All of the gifts are for edification and there should be no over-emphasis of any one gift.

Rule #2

1 Corinthians 14:29 ...and let the others judge.

When someone speaks what they believe to be a word of prophecy, the believers in the group must judge its accuracy according to God's already revealed Word. The leader of the group has a very real responsibility to judge the accuracy of the prophecy. He should look at it from at least these two viewpoints: content and character. Does its content agree with the revealed content of Scripture? Does its character agree with the revealed character of God?

I recommend you stop and discuss the prophecy right then and there. Write it down while it is fresh. Take it seriously from the beginning, and don't take it to heart until you have examined it thoroughly.

Rule #3

1 Corinthians 14:30 But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent.

At first this statement seems like a contradiction. It seems to be saying that you can interrupt someone if you suddenly receive a prophecy.

That can't be the correct understanding of these words since it would then contradict what Paul said earlier. Here is what I think it means: Paul just told you "let two or three prophets speak." He is putting a *time limit* on each prophecy! In other words, don't just ramble on; let others exercise their gift of prophecy, too. That agrees with what he says next:

1 Corinthians 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

When Paul says "you can all prophesy," is he saying everyone can and should have this gift? No. In chapter twelve you learned that not everyone has the gift of prophecy. In addition, he just limited the exercise of the gift of prophecy to two or three instances per meeting. He is simply saying that those who prophesy should do so in an orderly way, allowing time for others to exercise their gifts.

1 Corinthians 14:32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

When the Spirit is truly the source of your gifts there will be peace, not confusion. Peace is achieved by controlling your gifts according to the rules set forth, and especially to the overall principle that your gifts should be exercised in ways that edify others.

There was another problem in the meetings at Corinth. It didn't involve Spirit anointed speech; it involved the women:

1 Corinthians 14:34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.

1 Corinthians 14:35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

Paul is **not** telling women they cannot speak in the meetings of the church. In chapter eleven and verse five he already referred to women praying and prophesying in meetings. Women were allowed to participate in the meetings.

The reference to "their husbands at home" immediately indicates that Paul is thinking about the behavior of certain married women. We can't know exactly what the problem was but we can determine some of the attitudes of these women:

Whatever they were doing lacked a proper submissiveness because he says they are "to be submissive."

Whatever they were doing was shameful because he said "it is shameful." These married women were speaking to their husbands during the meetings of the church in a way that was unsubmitive and shameful. The word translated "speak" gives you a clue. It carries the connotation of *chattering*. Christianity had given women a great freedom in their worship; they could participate in prayer and in prophesy. But some of the married women were abusing their freedom by chattering to their husbands during the meeting while others were speaking. Their chattering was interrupting the meeting - the way chattering always does! They should control themselves and talk to their husbands at home.

In one of our earlier studies I discussed how someone's background can often exert a stronger influence over their behavior than the Bible does. Paul deals with that in verses thirty-six through thirty-eight:

1 Corinthians 14:36 Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?

1 Corinthians 14:37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 14:38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

You and I are not at liberty to develop our own rules regarding the exercise of the gifts. Regardless your background and experiences with the exercise of spiritual

gifts, these rules must be acknowledged and followed. If you have seen or even personally experienced something different, then you must bring your background into submission to the Bible!

Conclusion

Paul encourages you to experience the gifts of the Spirit in your meetings.

1 Corinthians 14:39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

Decently focuses on how your meetings appear to onlookers - to the uninformed or to unbelievers. *In order* focuses on your ability and responsibility to exercise your gift or gifts in the ways that edify others - making sure your gift is understood and under control.

Teaching on the gifts usually finds you in one of two places in your own experience with the gifts: You are either at a place of *discovery*, or you are at a place of *correction*.

The believers at Corinth were at a place of correction. Their understanding of the exercise of spiritual gifts needed correction. Anyone whose experience of the gifts is like theirs also needs correction! As Paul said, " If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord."

Others are at a place of discovery. You might need to discover certain gifts of the Spirit and how then can truly be edifying when exercised Scripturally.

As we press forward as a fellowship, seeking in our various meetings to follow the instruction of God's Word concerning the gifts, be open to both correction and discovery.