

I Corinthians - Lesson 12

I Corinthians Chapter 12

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Memory verses for this week: *1 Pet 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.*

Introduction: Last week in Chapter 11, Paul taught on the need of modesty in women and the order of the family as God laid it out. The man is the head of the household as Christ is the head of the church, and when we accept the Bible's teaching on this, we find families that are happy and blessed of the Lord.

I. Spiritual Gifts in the Body of Christ for Ministry and Worship

1 Cor 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

1 Cor 12:2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

Paul had an earnest desire for the Christians there in Corinth to be familiar with the truth about "spiritual gifts." If there was a need in Paul's day, how much more do we in this day and age need to know the truth about this topic. This is perhaps one of the biggest differences in belief in churches today. For us to be effective witnesses for Christ, we need to know the truth concerning the speaking in tongues, and those that prophesy.

If we don't know what to expect, we will be led about by every sort of doctrine and never grow into mature Christians. Paul reminded these in the church that many of them were at one time unsaved Gentiles that served dumb idols. While few would consider it, we have many in America today serving idols that are just as silly as those figures of gold and brass. Whether we worship a thing made by hands, or whether it be a sport or some possession, anything that takes us away from the service of God is an idol.

1 Cor 12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

When Paul says that no man can say that Jesus is Lord except by being led by the Holy Spirit, he is certainly not saying that some that claim to know Jesus but are still lost do not exist. There are many who fill the churches each Sunday that have never experienced the life changing salvation that Jesus Christ brings. But all those who truly understand Jesus have been called and led by the Holy Spirit unto salvation.

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

John 6:64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

John 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Luke 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

We see in these verses people who said Lord, Lord, but yet were not saved. If we claim Jesus as our Lord, we should do what He has commanded.

1 Cor 12:4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

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

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

1 Cor 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

In speaking directly of spiritual gifts, the apostle is talking about our abilities for service given by the Holy Ghost to us individually. Verse 4 speaks of how many different gifts there are when it speaks of the diversities of gifts. But whatever gifts we have, it is due to the Holy Spirit bestowing them unto us. As there are many gifts, there are many different ways in which these gifts are used.

How we administer these gifts may be different, but the same Holy Spirit directs us in this. As there are different ways of administering the gifts, there are also many differences of operation... but only one God who works all in all. These various manifestations are given "to every man" for the general good of the whole church. (to profit withal as it says in verse 7)

While there are different kinds of gifts, there is one Godhead. Note that the trinity is set forth in these verses. The Spirit=the Holy Spirit. The Lord=the Lord Jesus Christ. God=God the Father.

The "word of wisdom" and "the word of knowledge," were gifts given, enabling them to understand and apply God's truth to a certain situation.

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

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

1 Cor 12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

We find nine particular gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in verses 8 through 10. Some of these are relatively common, while others border on the miraculous. Even at this time, if a person possessed these special "miracle gifts", he or she was not to consider themselves better or more holy than others in the church. When we begin to compare ourselves one to the other, we will make mistakes. But when we judge ourselves towards Jesus Christ, then we will find how fallen and unworthy we truly are.

Rom 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Rom 14:13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

We found in last week's lesson that we need to not consider judging others, but rather we should judge ourselves. It seems that the yardstick is substantially longer and more difficult for our brother to measure up than it is for ourselves. That is why we must constantly see ourselves with a true comparison, and that being against the perfect One, Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 11:31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

God had a special reason for giving the early day Christians special powers, and it was to confirm the Word of God. By the miracles, those who would not believe might turn to Christ for salvation. Most of those special gifts are not available to us today, although the same God who healed and raised the dead is on the throne. When we have enough faith and pray, I know that God grants special miracles even in our day. But the special gifts like laying on of the hands to heal someone is no longer in force today.

Each of the gifts mentioned was given by the Holy Spirit. In dispensing spiritual gifts, one person is given the ability after study to grasp divine teaching. (the word of knowledge as it is called.) Another is gifted in being able to apply what he knows in a wise way as it speaks of in verse 8. Some people are blessed with the gift of faith. This is not speaking of the faith we have when we are saved, but

a greater type confidence in God to be used for a special work of the Lord.

1 Cor 12:11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Verse 11 tells us that the Holy Spirit gives these gifts to individuals as it pleases Him. Why God gives certain ones more talent in an area than others, we may never know in this life. But God's sovereign will is perfect, and every thing, both good and bad in our lives, are used to His honor and glory.

The gift of "faith" was simply to believe that God would do what He said He would do. The "healing" and "miracles" gifts were given as the credentials of God's servants. This gift was temporary and soon passed away.

Heb. 2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. 2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; 3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

"Prophecy," "tongues," and "interpretation of tongues" were temporary gifts that passed away. We shall see this clearly when we study chapter 13. The word "tongues" simply means languages of various races of people. (See also Acts 2:4-11). Not everyone was to have these gifts. The Spirit divided these gifts as He willed. Many people are seeking these gifts in vain, not realizing that they cannot be sought and claimed, but that they are given to whomever the Spirit willed. Most of the gifts no longer exist today.

II. The Body of Christ (the local church) Compared to the Human Body

*1 Cor 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.
1 Cor 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

Almost universally, we find that verses 12-31 are misinterpreted by many Bible teachers. Many good men have been led into believing in the so-called universal church, by adopting a warped view of 1 Cor. 12. The "body" in this passage does not refer to a universal church, or a universal body, but to the local Church at Corinth. Any true New Testament Church in any location and in any age is also

the "body of Christ." 1 Corinthians was written *"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth...Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."* (1 Cor. 1:2a, 12:27) The local New Testament Church, (the only kind God has today) is called "the body of Christ." (1 Cor. 12:27) It is called "the house of God." (1 Tim. 3:15) It is also called "the temple of God." (1 Cor. 3:16)

This body of verse 12, is a local body. One in which there is to be no schism. It is one where if one member suffer, all members suffer. This could only be in a local body. It could not happen in a worldwide universal body.

Although our physical body has many members with diverse functions and duties, it is still one organism. The church is the same way. The Lord gives many members within the one body, but all are different and many have unique talents that God uses. Not everyone has a special talent to sing special music, but some are given this by the Lord. No matter how big or small our talent, God blends it together to be used to carry out the functions of the church.

The person who picks up the trash out of the bathroom is important. The teacher who teaches the youngest child in Sunday School is important. And God blesses different members with talents to be used for His honor and glory. Verse 13 is one of the most misunderstood verses in the bible. So many teach that when a person is saved, that the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ. Nowhere in scripture does it mention the Holy Spirit baptizing of himself. John the Baptist taught that Jesus would baptize the church WITH the Holy Ghost.

Mat 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

Jesus was the one who baptized the church on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost was the element he used to do this. Today, we use water and water only to do the baptizing. If there was more than one baptism, Ephesians 4:5 would have included it.

Eph 4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire,

and it sat upon each of them.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Acts 2:6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.

1 Cor 12:15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

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

1 Cor 12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

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

1 Cor 12:20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

As every member of our human body is important, so is every member of the local church. Not every member of the church can teach a Sunday school class, but that does not mean that they are not a member of the church. Just as we have to have all of our members in the body to be totally functional, a complete church body is comprised of many members. (Pastor, teachers, deacons, song leader, etc are all needed to be an effective witness for Jesus Christ.)

If your one and only gift is to come and be in the service, this is still needful. We will never know the total impact of our lives on others by our faithful attendance in God's house. You know that it is an encouragement to the pastor, and how much more to God to see us come and assemble for His honor.

1 Cor 12:22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

1 Cor 12:23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

1 Cor 12:24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

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

1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Some parts of the body do not have as much importance as others. Some may seem like feeble members, but every one of them is needed. Your ear may not seem too pretty or important, but try and function without hearing. I know some people who are deaf do function without being able to hear, but it takes special effort. Those that may not seem so important are needful, and no one has a right to think less of them. God chose each one, and places us in the body as He sees fit to make a perfect and complete church. God himself has tempered the body together, giving to each part its necessary function.

Those we might think are less attractive have very important duties to perform. Each member, doing his or her part, help us to accomplish the work of the church. What is the least important duty in the church? Perhaps it is some one who visits the sick, or perhaps the one who sweeps the floor. It might be the handy man that fixes a light fixture that is not working properly. But God knows that all of these things are important, and we will never rise to high levels of service until we learn to do the small things faithfully.

Luke 16:10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

Luke 16:11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

Luke 16:12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

1 Cor 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

1 Cor 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

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

1 Cor 12:30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?

1 Cor 12:31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

God is Sovereign, therefore he places each worker in the church, the body of Christ. Notice the offices and gifts mentioned in verse. 28

- a. Apostles, there are no apostles today.
- b. Prophecy is complete, there are no prophets today.
- c. Teachers teach the word of God, they still exist today.
- d. Miracles and gifts of healing are no longer needed, so no one has the gift of miracles and healing today. However, God still answers the prayers of the saints for healing, according to His will.

- e. Helps and governments has to do with the guiding of the local church. God still provides leadership today.
- f. The gift of tongues no longer exists, as we shall see in chapter 13.

The answer to each one of the questions in verses 29 and 30 are the same. It is NO. In verse 31, we have the connecting link to chapter 13. Please note that tongues is the last gift mentioned, because it is the least important of all the gifts. Yet, it was the most sought after in the Church at Corinth. Remember that this was the most worldly Church in all of Paul's epistles. Even though the gift of tongues does not exist today, it is the most sought-after gift among the Charismatics.

Most of these gifts are self-explanatory. Some can teach, others in that day had the ability to heal. Some could speak in tongues, while others could interpret those tongues. The term of governments speaks of those who had positions of leadership and administration. Those apostles and prophets were set in the church for a purpose, which was to perfect the saints for a work of ministry. When everyone is doing their part, we will edify and build up the church.

Paul closes and tells us to earnestly seek the best gifts, and those are the ones that God has specifically given to each of us. No two people are the same, but we can accomplish much when we put those limited talents in God's hand, and let the Holy Spirit direct us in the church.

* Additional comments added in July 2013 from E.L. Bynum

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.