

Called to the Common Good

PRINTED TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:1-13.

DEVOTIONAL READING: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31.

TIME: A.D. 55 **PLACE:** Ephesus

GOLDEN TEXT: "But the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all" (1 Corinthians 12:7 NKJV).

LESSON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:1-13 (New King James Version – NKJV)

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: ² You know that^[a] you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb^[b] idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus ^[c]accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ There are ^[d]diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works ^[e]all in all. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: ⁸ for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by ^[f]the same Spirit, 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. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

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. 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.

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. Explore an important passage that reveals the nature and function of spiritual gifts.
2. Teach that the members of Christ's body edify and complement one another through the exercise of spiritual gifts.
3. Encourage each Christian to use the gifts God has given him or her and to appreciate and benefit from what He has given others.

INTRODUCTION

It is amazing that something as small as a single tooth or a baby toe can cause the rest of the body so much grief if either is irritated. No one can attest to this like a person who has spent an entire night await because of an abscessed or impacted tooth, someone who walking across a dark room accidentally rams a toe on a piece of furniture. And what about the little-known ulnar nerve? Bumping it does not cause anyone much fun although it is more commonly known as the "funny" bone - and it is not even a bone but a nerve! And lastly, when was the last time you accidentally bit your tongue... in the same spot... over and over again... on the same day? These traumas have caused many an appetite to be lost; or, many a body to awaken fully with great sensitivity.

It is no doubt that small members of our bodies can cause the entire body great pain or great pleasure. Likewise, being one body of baptized believers in Christ Jesus, it is impossible for one member to hurt and the whole body not feel the effects of the same. Each of our body parts functions toward the benefit of the whole. This is what Paul is explaining to the Corinthians in today's lesson.

In essence, body parts are different and serve different functions, but each diverse part is a component of the complete and functional body. Similarly, God has given His people various spiritual gifts to complement one another and make His church function effectively.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul begins 1 Corinthians 12 with the words, *"Now concerning spiritual gifts."* This tells us that he is about to address another question that was put to him in a letter that the Corinthian church sent him (see 7:1, 25; and 8:1).

We have left the idea of running the Christian race to win, and are looking at the spiritual gifts that are given to each Christian by God. Because all Christians are runners in this race and do not stop running until the race is finished, we were equipped by God with certain gifts that will be of benefit to us and to others over the course of the race. As today's lesson indicates, God's gifts are given to us to be used to His glory and for the edification-or lifting up, or strengthening-of His people.

The Need for the Gifts - 1 Corinthians 12:1-3

The Holy Spirit is the One who convicts an unbeliever to confess his sin. And it is through Christians witnessing to these unbelievers that this conviction is given its start. John 16:8 says, "When He (the Helper or Holy Spirit) has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (NKJV). The Holy Spirit demonstrates the truth of Jesus Christ beyond fear of contradiction.

1. What divine influence causes someone to confess Christ?

The Source of the Gifts-1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Paul mentions each of the Godhead in these verses. In verse four he says that while the spiritual gifts vary, the (Holy) Spirit is the same. In verse five he says that there are different ministries in the working of the gifts, but the same Lord (Jesus Christ). And in verse six, Paul says that even though there is diversity in the uses of the spiritual gifts, it is through God's power that unification comes through all gifts to His people.

2. Where do we see the Trinity in this passage?

The Diversity of the Gifts-1 Corinthians 12:7-10

The gift of (the word of) knowledge appears to refer to one's ability to teach doctrine; whereas the gift of (the word of) wisdom refers to one's ability to practically apply this knowledge.

3. What were the gifts of wisdom and knowledge?

Many kinds of healings are found in the New Testament. The ministries of both Christ (see Matt. 4:23) and His apostles were characterized by healing the sick. Just to name a few: Acts 3:7 tells of the lame man whose *"ankle bones received strength;"* Acts 5:15 tells of how the people *"brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them;"* Acts 14:8-10 tells about the lame man in Lystra whose feet were without strength, and who *"Paul observing him... said with a loud voice, 'Stand up straight on your feet!'"* And (the man) leaped

and walked;" and Acts 28:8-9 tells were *"the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery"* and how Paul *"went in to him and prayed"* ... and *"laid hands on him and healed him;"* and not only this man, but *"the rest of those on the island who had diseases came and were healed."*

4. What kinds of healings are recorded in the New Testament?

Since another spiritual gift was *"the working of miracles"* in 1 Cor. 12:10, we can assume that this included miracles other than healings. This might include such miracles as raising the dead (see Acts 9:36-41), inflicting chastisement on those attempting to thwart the gospel (see Acts 13:9-11), casting out demons (see Acts 19:12), and deliverance from deadly serpents (see Acts 28:1-6; and Mark 16:17-20).

5. How would the gift of miracles differ from the other gifts?

Walvoord and Zuck say that "Prophecy is the ability-like that of the Old Testament prophets-to declare a message of God for His people." As in the case of the Hebrew prophets, the New Testament prophets were inspired by God to foretell future events (see Acts 11:27-29; 21:10-11). They may also have been involved in general exhortation to the church (see Acts 13:1; and 15:32). There were also female prophets in the early church (see Acts 21:8-9; and 1 Cor. 11:5).

6. What was the gift of prophecy? How was this gift exercised?

The discerning of spirits was probably the ability to detect the presence of evil spirits in an individual (see Acts 16:16-18). This gift might also have been useful in determining whether a false prophet was present. We are admonished in 1 John 4:1 to *"Not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."*

7. What was discerning of spirits?

Concerning the issue of speaking in tongues, there are two major views. The first sees the gift of tongues as similar to what occurred on Pentecost (see Acts 2:4-11). This tongues-speaking refers to the ability to speak in an unlearned, living language. Interpretation is the ability to translate an unlearned, known language expressed in the assembly (see 1 Cor. 14:27). Others believe that the Corinthians were practicing a kind of ecstatic utterance that was unintelligible to human beings. IV The Unity of the Gifts-1 Corinthians 12:11-13

8. What are some of the issues related to our understanding of the gift of tongues?

Paul uses the human body to illustrate how the church of God was to function. Of course, *"Christ is the head of the body, the church"* (See Col. 1:18; and Eph. 5:23). Like hands and feet or eyes and ears in the human body (see 1 Cor. 12:15-16), all of God's people have different gifts to be used in the body of Christ. Just as the parts of the human body are interdependent, so are we in the body of Christ. This is true whether a member of the church is suffering or being honored (see vs. 26).

9. Why is it important for us to understand the significance of the church being Christ's body?

We have all been baptized into one body (see 1 Cor. 12:13). Holy Spirit baptism is the heritage of all believers. The Holy Spirit has made all integral parts of the body, the church. Read Romans 8:9.

10. What is the significance of being baptized into one body?

CONCLUSION

The Christian life is an ongoing relationship with the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to truly acknowledge Jesus as Lord. He also sovereignly bestows spiritual gifts on each believer. Divine diversity-authored by the Holy Spirit-results in wonderful unity as members complement and serve one another within the context of the body of Christ.

You are challenged today to discover the gifts God has given you. You should also use your gift(s) and affirm the gifts of others.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. The Spirit's presence in our lives is revealed by our words and actions (1 Cor. 12:1-3).
2. We should welcome the diverse people and gifts God places in His church (vv. 4-6).
3. Our gifts will glorify God only if we use them to benefit other believers (vs. 7).
4. Never judge people by the gifts the Spirit has given them (vv. 8-10).
5. Let us not envy others' gifts, for the Spirit alone determines the gifts we have (vv. 11--12).
6. Spiritual status within the church has nothing to do with race or gender (vs. 13).

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

"Christ does not view our differences as barriers but brings our uniquenesses together into one harmonious body-a body that He is the head of."

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we are thankful that You have provided us with spiritual gifts that we can develop and use to Your glory and to the building up of Your church. May we take seriously the great responsibility there is in having a God-given gift, and may we never take it for granted. Whatever work that You have prepared for us to do, may we always be mindful of our accountability to You and to our brothers and sisters in Christ-knowing that all gifts are given for the common good of Your whole church and not for our individual agendas or glory. Keep us humble, Lord. In the name of Jesus we pray, amen.