

Gifts of the Spirit

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[0 : 00] But if I could, this evening for a short while, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12.

1 Corinthians, chapter 12, and if we read again in verse 4. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit.

And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

To each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. And so on. As you know, this evening we're continuing our study on the portion and work of the Holy Spirit.

And in our study we've considered that when the Holy Spirit begins to work in our lives, He brings form, fullness, and fellowship. And the Holy Spirit, He always does it because this book that we love so dearly, the Bible, it's inspired.

[1 : 13] The Word of God, it's God-breathed, it's Spirit-filled. It's the divine breath of God the Holy Spirit. Which means that this book, which we read, it's a living book.

It's a book that speaks into our lives and into our situations. But more than that, this book, it shapes us, it moulds us more and more into the image of Jesus Christ.

But we've also discovered in our study that in the Old Testament, the Old Testament church you could say, the Holy Spirit dwelt in saints and upon servants. But now in the New Testament church, the Holy Spirit dwells in all of us and upon all of us as saints and servants, so that we will be witnesses for Jesus to the ends of the earth.

And throughout the weeks we've discovered various things about the work of the Holy Spirit. We've discovered that by God's grace we've been baptised by the Holy Spirit. We've received the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is the promise of salvation.

And even through our daily reading and studying of the Bible, we are being led by the Holy Spirit day by day. But as we continue our study on the work of the Holy Spirit, the question that we're looking at this evening is, what does it mean to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

[2 : 32] Or what are the gifts of the Holy Spirit? And this is an important question because there are many Christians who emphasise the importance of the gifts of the Spirit, to the point that they claim and they even insist that if you don't possess certain gifts of the Spirit, then you're not a proper Christian.

But sadly many of these Christians, they have misread and even misunderstood the teaching of Scripture because they believe that those who have received what they call the second blessing of the Holy Spirit, they say that they have received the gift of tongues and therefore they are proper Christians.

But I want to say that from the outset, that the concept and the teaching of the second blessing is completely unbiblical. And we can see that from Paul's teaching here in 1 Corinthians 12 because, well, the second blessing, it's not found in Scripture and it also suggests that there are stages of our Christianity where we're converted first, then we have this second blessing, this new experience.

But that's something Paul speaks against here in this passage because Paul emphasises in 1 Corinthians 12 that we're all one in Christ and the church is one body working together.

And because we're all one in Christ, united by the Holy Spirit, there is no second blessing. We're all in him and we have received all the blessings that come to us through faith.

[4 : 12] And I'm sure I mentioned this to you, those who go to the Bible study, I mentioned about the American preacher, Steve Lawson. He was once asked, have you received the second blessing?

And Steve Lawson, he responded by saying, yes, I've received the second blessing. And the third and the fourth. He said, in fact, Paul says that I've received every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

And you know, my friend, as a Christian, you have not only received, the Bible reminds us that we have not only received what some would call the second blessing, but we have received every spiritual blessing in Christ.

You have everything you need tonight as a Christian and it's given to you because you are in Christ, united to Jesus Christ by faith, enabled by the Holy Spirit.

And as a consequence of that, Paul says, you have received gifts of the Spirit. But what does it mean to receive the gifts of the Spirit or what are the gifts of the Spirit?

[5 : 19] And I just want us to consider this passage under three headings. Three headings, a spiritual blessing, a spiritual benefit, and a spiritual body. A spiritual blessing, a spiritual benefit, and a spiritual body.

So we look first of all at the spiritual blessing. A spiritual blessing, what Paul says in verses one to three. He says, now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.

You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led.

Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says Jesus is accursed.

And no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit. Now, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, it was a letter that was written, of course, to Christians.

But the problem with the Corinthians is that they weren't acting like Christians. They weren't living a holy life with a distinct lifestyle and a different worldview from those around them.

[6 : 28] In fact, the Corinthians, they were doing the opposite because the church in Corinth, it was a worldly church. It was obsessed with worldly distractions and worldly desires.

And as a result of the worldliness in the church in Corinth, there was quarreling among them. There were divisions among them. And there were many sinful activities that were taking place in the church.

And Paul addresses all of these issues throughout this letter. He addresses issues of sexual immorality, homosexuality. He addresses issues of pride, the abuse of the Lord's Supper.

He addresses issues of idolatry. And he addresses here the abuse of spiritual gifts. And, you know, if we were to see the actions of the Christians at Corinth, if we were to see them firsthand in the first century, we'd probably write them off and think that they're not a church at all.

They're the synagogue of Satan. And yet, we're reminded again and again in this letter that Paul loved the church in Corinth. And he loved them simply because Christ loved them and gave himself for them.

[7 : 38] And it's because of Christ's love for the Corinthians that Paul addresses them here in this chapter and throughout his letter. He addresses them as brothers and sisters.

He says in verse 1, Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and, you can translate it, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. And, you know, by this point in his letter, Paul has addressed various issues that were facing the church in Corinth.

But in this chapter, Paul deals with the use and the abuse of spiritual gifts. And Paul makes very clear to the Corinthians that the reason he's writing these words is so that there will be no confusion or misunderstanding about spiritual gifts.

Paul wants to make sure that the church is not ignorant or uninformed when it comes to gifts of the Holy Spirit. And Paul qualifies what he's saying.

He qualifies it in verse 2 when he explains that there was a time. There was a time in their life when they were ignorant and uninformed. And when they did worship idols, because he says that they were worshipping idols, they were without Christ, they were without hope in the world, they were without the Holy Spirit indwelling them and leading them and walking with them.

[9 : 03] And, you know, well, like all of us here tonight, there was a time in our life when we were dead in trespasses and sins and we were walking according to the course of this world.

And like what it was for the Corinthians, in our spiritual deadness, we were ignorant to the things of God. We were uninformed about salvation.

We were lost and walking in darkness. And that was until God the Holy Spirit inwardly and effectually called us by his grace.

And in that moment, as the Catechism reminds us, we were convinced of our sin and misery. We were enlightened in the knowledge of Christ. We were persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ as he's freely offered to us in the gospel.

And by the power of the Holy Spirit, we came to confess, as Paul mentions in verse 3, we came to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[10:06] That's what Paul says. He says in verse 3, Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says, Jesus is accursed. And no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except in the Spirit.

Paul says that your salvation is a spiritual blessing. Because when the Holy Spirit begins to work in your life, you will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And if the Holy Spirit is working in your life, then you won't want to say, or you'll never say, Jesus is accursed to me, or Jesus is anathema to me.

And you won't say that because with the Holy Spirit in you, Jesus now means everything to you.

There might have been a day in your life when you would say with Robert Murray McShane, I once was a stranger to grace unto God.

I knew not my danger, nor felt not my load. Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree, Jehovah said, Kenu, was nothing to me. There was a time in your life and my life when Jesus meant nothing to us.

[11:21] He wasn't our priority. He wasn't our focus. He wasn't our Lord. But when the Holy Spirit began to work inwardly and effectually in your life, you came to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord over your life.

And Jesus now means everything to you. He's Lord over your whole life. And you can see, as McShane went on to say, when free grace awoke me by light from on high, then legal fear shook me.

I trembled to die. No refuge, nor safety in self could I see. Jehovah said, Kenu, my saviour must be. And you know, Paul says that your confession that Jesus Christ is Lord, it's evidence that the Holy Spirit is working in your life.

Because no one says, he says, no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. So if you want to know, if you're doubting your salvation, if you want to know whether or not the Holy Spirit is working in your life, is Jesus your Lord?

Is Jesus Lord over your life? Are you submitting, are you living in submission to Jesus Christ? Are you denying self daily? Are you taking up your cross and following after Jesus?

[12:44] Because as Paul says, no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit. And confessing Jesus Christ as Lord, it's a spiritual blessing.

It is as Paul teaches, it's a gift of the Holy Spirit. And it produces a spiritual benefit for the church of Jesus Christ.

And this is what Paul draws attention to secondly. He's spoken about this spiritual blessing that we confess Jesus as Lord. But when we confess Jesus as Lord, there is a spiritual benefit.

So a spiritual blessing. And then he goes on to talk about a spiritual benefit. Look again at verse 3. He says, therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says Jesus is accursed.

And no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord.

[13:47] There are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

And so having explained that salvation is a spiritual blessing, it's a gift of God. It's a gift of the Spirit. Paul then, he goes on to explain that when the Holy Spirit is at work in someone's life, he will produce in them gifts of the Spirit.

And with this, Paul wants to make absolutely clear that the gift of the Spirit, the gift singular, the gift of the Spirit is salvation. That's the greatest blessing, to confess Jesus Christ as your Lord.

That's the greatest blessing. And your confession that Jesus Christ is Lord is the greatest evidence that you have received that gift of the Holy Spirit. But more than that, Paul says, and he explains, that the gift of the Spirit is the only way someone can receive the gifts, plural, of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, you must have the Holy Spirit working in you in order that he will work out of you and produce gifts for God's glory.

[15:07] And the Spirit must be in you in order to produce gifts of the Spirit because you can't manufacture spiritual gifts. You can't invent them, you can't create them, and you can't teach yourself spiritual gifts.

There's no DIY guide to producing spiritual gifts because like salvation, Paul says, they're all of grace. They're all from God, he says.

And that's what Paul is emphasizing in verses 4 to 6. He says, it's a work of God, it's a work of the Trinity, he says. There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are varieties of activities, but it's the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

And the point that Paul is making is that all spiritual gifts are of God, they're all of grace. They're not of man, and they're not manufactured. And Paul makes this point because there were some in Corinth who were using and abusing spiritual gifts in the church.

[16:17] Where they claimed that they had spiritual gifts when in reality they had neither the gift of the Spirit nor gifts of the Spirit. And you know, when you think about it, you see it a lot even today.

You watch the God Channel and you see tele-evangelism. These tele-evangelists who have such a large following because they claim that they have the spiritual gift of healing.

And they say that they're able to heal every sickness and every disease if you only have enough faith to believe. And some of them claim that they have this handkerchief that was touched by the Apostle Paul.

It's mentioned in Acts 19. We're told there that God was doing wonderful miracles by the hands of Paul so that even the handkerchiefs and the aprons that when they touched Paul's skin and they could carry them to someone and they could heal them.

Heal their sicknesses and their diseases and cast out demons. And these tele-evangelists they have crowds following them and they make fortunes on people phoning in to buy their product because these poor people they're looking and longing for help and healing.

[17:35] But the reality is these tele-evangelists they're just like vultures preying on the weak and the vulnerable. And this is what was happening in Corinth.

And that's why Paul clearly states that spiritual gifts that are not they're not for the good and glory of man but they're for the good of the church and the glory of God.

One commentator states that what Paul is teaching is that not all that glitters is gold. Not all that glitters is gold.

And it's an important point to make because well we can be easily misled and we can be misled by what's new and what's different and what's attractive.

But that doesn't always mean it's for the good of the church and the glory of God. But Paul says that's what spiritual gifts are for. Spiritual gifts are for the good of the church and for the glory of God.

[18:37] They are not for the detriment of the gospel the division of the church or the displeasure of God. And these spiritual gifts they're given by the one spirit says Paul so that it will be for the good of the church and the glory of God.

That's what Paul says in verse 8. For to one is given through the spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same spirit to another faith by the same spirit to another gifts of healing by the one spirit to another the workings of miracles to another prophecy to another the ability to distinguish between spirits to another variety various kinds of tongues to another the interpretation of tongues and then Paul goes on to affirm in verse 11 that every spiritual gift is given according to the will of God and they're not manufactured invented or created no he says they're given for the good of the church and the glory of God he says in verse 11 all these all these gifts are empowered by one and the same spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills and you know those who believe that you need to have the second blessing and be baptized with the Holy

Spirit and speak in tongues in order to be a proper Christian they completely misunderstand the teaching of Paul because the gift of speaking in tongues as Paul mentions in that list or even the gift of interpreting what was spoken that was given to the church those gifts were given to the church so that those who were visiting the congregation those who were passing through the region of Corinth it was that they would understand the message of the gospel Corinth as you know it was a seaport city it was a seaport city in which many people from many nations they passed through that city and

traded all their goods and so what good would the gospel be to these foreigners if it was veiled in another language what benefit would it be to their soul if they couldn't understand the good news of Jesus Christ in their own language that's why the church was given the gift of speaking in tongues and interpreting these languages it wasn't to create an elite group of proper Christians or this real Christianity no no these spiritual gifts wasn't to be to the detriment of the gospel or the division of the church or the displeasure of God no spiritual gifts they were always for the good of the church and the glory of God and you know the point is this that if the gospel is proclaimed in another language that people can't understand then it's only to the detriment of the gospel to the division of the church and even the displeasure of God and you know when Paul highlights that Corinth he talks about it in chapter 14 when he highlights that Corinth is a cosmopolitan city he addresses the use and the abuse of speaking in tongues he spends a whole chapter on it and Paul says in chapter 14 that there are doubtless many languages in the world and none is without meaning he says but if I do not know the meaning of the language

I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me and Paul is making his point clear the gift of speaking in tongues the gift of being able to speak another language and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in that language it should always be for the good of the church and the glory of God not to the detriment of the gospel not to the division of the church and certainly not to the displeasure of God in other words the gospel is not to be preached to an elite group who can understand only that particular language no one is to be excluded from the message of the gospel because of the language they speak and you know this is what Paul is emphasizing here we should never put a language before the gospel because it goes directly against the words of Jesus and the purpose of the gospel itself because we all know

[23 : 19] John 3 16 for God so loved the world the world in all its diversity the world in all its different languages he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever whosoever believeth in him would not perish but have eternal life and so if the gospel message is for whosoever therefore it must be delivered to whosoever in their own language that they can understand and you know that's what Paul emphasized to the church in Corinth and they were surrounded by people with all these different languages from different nations but they had to understand that the gifts of the spirit were for the good of the church and for the glory of God these spiritual benefits they were to build up the church and spread the gospel not hinder it it was never to hinder it and Paul even says he says later on in chapter 14 he's addressing the abuse of spiritual gifts and speaking in different tongues he says since you are eager for manifestations of the spirit strive to excel in building up the church and his point was that spiritual gifts should always be for the good of the church and the glory of God not the detriment of the gospel the division of the church or even the displeasure of God and the reason for all this as Paul goes on to explain in the second half of the chapter is because the church is to be a spiritual body the church is a spiritual body that's what we see thirdly

Paul addresses the subject of gifts of the spirit and he speaks about a spiritual blessing a spiritual benefit and then lastly a spiritual body he says in verse 12 for just as the body is one and as many members and all the members of the body though many are one body so it is with Christ for in one spirit we are all baptized into one body Jews or Greeks slaves or free and all are made to drink of one spirit for the body does not consist of one member but of many so Paul continues he continues in this chapter about teaching about the gifts of the spirit and he highlights that the church is one body with many members and with this Paul uses a brilliant illustration you can almost say it's a parable and it's an illustration that we can all easily relate to and what Paul says is that like our bodies he says look at yourself you are fearfully and wonderfully made your body works together every part of your body works together to achieve goals and complete tasks that's how the church of Jesus

Christ should be it's one body with many members and each member has been given various gifts for the good of the church and for the glory of God look at what he says in verse 15 he extends the illustration he says if the foot should say because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body that would not make it any less a part of the body and if the ear should say because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body that would not make it any less a part of the body Paul says that the unity and the oneness of the church ought to stress to us that no member of the church is more important than another member no spiritual gift is more important than another spiritual gift no service to Jesus is more important than another service to Jesus Paul is saying it's all important it's all

important because it's all for the good of the church and for the glory of God and with that Paul explains that there's a reason why the church is to be a unity with diversity there's a reason why the church is a unity with diversity because he says in verse 17 if the whole body were an eye where would be the sense of hearing if the whole body were an ear where would be the sense of smell but as it is God arranged the members in the body each one of them as he chose if all were a single member where would the body be as it is there are many parts yet one body Paul says that in the church there's unity in diversity we're one body with many members therefore no one is more important than someone else no one is to be given a higher position than someone else no one is to be more significant than someone else those who are in the foreground are as much as not as they're not as they're not more important than those in the background we all have different personalities we all have different temperaments we're all different people but the thing is we're all one in

Christ we're all united to him by faith we have all received gifts of the Holy Spirit which we're to use for the good of the church and for the glory of God and this is what Paul teaches he keeps on emphasizing this he goes on to say in verse 21 the eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of you not again the head to the feet I have no need of you on the contrary the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty which our more presentable parts do not require but God has so composed the body giving greater honor to the part that lacked it that there may be no division in the body but that the members may have the same care for one another if one member suffers all suffer together if one member is honored all rejoice together now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it my friend

[29 : 55] Paul is reminding us this evening that we're all one in Christ we're all united to him by faith and we've all received gifts of the Holy Spirit we're a spiritual body and we're to work together we're not to compete with one another we're not to think that everyone should have the same gifts and abilities that we have we're not to try and do someone else's gift we're not to be jealous of their gift God has given your gift to you so that you will use it for the good of his church and for the glory of his name and whatever you do you're not to refuse you're not to refuse or even misuse your gift to the detriment of the gospel the division of the church or the displeasure of God we can't say we can't say that we don't have any gifts of the spirit because if you have the gift of the spirit in salvation then you have received gifts of the spirit and you're to use your gifts you're to test your gifts you're to do as

Paul said to Timothy fan into flame the gift of God that is in you and you know that's what Paul even challenged the Romans with he challenged the church in Rome when he said to them in Romans chapter 12 he said having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us let us use them let us use them he says if prophecy in proportion to our faith if service in our serving the one who teaches in his teaching the one who exhorts in his exhortation the one who contributes in generosity the one who leads with zeal the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness and Paul's challenge is there for us too having gifts that differ he says gifts that differ according to the grace given to us let us use them let us use them therefore whether our gift is cleaning cooking baking working with children visiting praying presenting preaching pastoring teaching organizing accounting guiding welcoming or even inviting people to come to testimonies or even to church whatever our gifts are we're to use them for the good of the church and for the glory of god our life's song as a body is to be psalm 115 not unto us lord not to us but do thou glory take unto thy name in for thy truth and for thy mercy's sake whatever our gifts are we're to use them for the good of the church and the glory of god but you know the overarching gift of the spirit which we must all possess is love and this is why the passage on love in 1st corinthians 13 immediately follows this chapter paul says with this i'm coming to a close he says at the beginning of chapter 13 he says if i speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love i am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal and if i have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if i have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love i am nothing if i give away all i have and i deliver up my body to be burned but have not love i gain nothing because as he goes on to say love is patient and kind love does not envy or boast it is not arrogant or rude it does not insist on its own way it is not irritable or resentful it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth love bears all things believes all things hopes all things endures all things love never ends but what does end he says as for prophecies they will pass away as for tongues they will cease as for knowledge it will pass away

and then

Paul he concludes his teaching on spiritual gifts he's told us about a spiritual blessing a spiritual benefit a spiritual body and then he says right at the end of 1 Corinthians 13 that's him bringing it all to a conclusion he says so now faith hope and love abide these three but the greatest of these is love the greatest spiritual gift that we must all possess as the body of Jesus Christ is love does I know what Jesus said if you're to be my disciple you will love one another my friend let's use our spiritual gifts not to the detriment of the gospel or the division of the church or the displeasure of God but for the good and for the glory of God because he has called us as one body by his spirit may the

Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray amen oh Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee that that we are even part of the body of Jesus we give thanks Lord that thy spirit has so worked in our lives that he has brought us to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and we pray that those gifts that thou hast given to us that we would do as thy word commands us that we would fan them into flame kingdom and for the glory of thy name that we would realize that they are the God who has given them to us that they are gifts of the spirit and help us Lord to be led by the spirit to walk in the spirit to be directed by the spirit and Lord to do everything in love for the glory of God and the furtherance of his kingdom Lord bless us we pray and all that we seek to do in thy name that it would bring honour to thee that it would lift up the name of

Jesus and that thou would receive all the glory that Christ would have the preeminence and that we would receive blessing bless us Lord we ask not because we deserve any of it but solely because the word of God who is gracious and who deals with us be here bless them wherever they are be near to them and keep them and help us Lord to keep looking to this Jesus who loved us and gave himself for us cleanse us then we pray take away our iniquity receive us graciously for Jesus sake Amen We shall conclude our service this evening by singing to God's praise in Psalm 133 Psalm 133 page 424 Psalm 133 we're singing the whole psalm a psalm that reminds us of the unity of [37 : 38] God's people and the blessing because of that unity behold how good a thing it is and how becoming well together such as brethren are in unity to dwindle the whole psalm to God's praise In unity to dwell.

Thy precious ointment on the head. The tongue, the bearded flow.

In it on spirit and to the sky. Did all this garments go.

Did all this garments go. As her months to the, to the dove.

On Zion hills descend. For there the blessing God commends.

[39 : 24] Life that shall never end. Life that shall never end.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God the Father. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with you all. Now and forevermore. Amen.