Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Gifts of the Body, Part 1
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
Code: 1311

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians Chapter 12 please. The last few weeks in preparation for a study of the book of Ephesians, we have been studying the concept of the body of Christ. We have talked about the body of Christ in terms of its nature. And we're not talking about His physical body, but the church which is His new body.

We've talked about the witness of the body, that is the importance of the body communicating. That is we who belong to Christ who are His church, who make up this body of believers, witnessing not only by our individual testimony, but by collective love and unity.

Tonight we come to the third in this series, entitled the gifts of the body. The Holy Spirit has specially empowered and enabled those of us who belong to Jesus Christ to carry about some very, very important functions. Now by way of introduction some thoughts, God wants to reach this whole world with His truth. Obviously.

In the Old Testament, Israel was God's vehicle to reach the world. In the gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Christ, Himself, and His disciples were the vehicle to reach the world.

Today, and sense the second chapter of Acts right up until today, the church is the vehicle through which God has designed to communicate to the world. And it is not only by the words that we say that we communicate, but it is also by what we are that we communicate. And that's the reason that Jesus said in John 13, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples that you have," what, "love one for another." And also in John 17, "That all men would know that the Father sent Christ if we were one." And He prayed, "that they may be one that all men might know that the Father sent me."

Our witness then is not only a verbal witness, it is not only a communication of the gospel in specifics, it is the witness of love and unity. And when we are one in love, the world will find our witness devastating. And so the church then is the vehicle by which God designed to communicate to the world His nature and His truth. And that's been the case since the second Chapter of Acts when the church was begun on the day of Pentecost.

A unity within the church on the basis of humility and love becomes then our greatest testimony. But needless to say, although all believers are one in terms of position that is 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, you have it right there, "By one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body whether Jew, Greek, bond,

free, we've all been made to drink into one Spirit." So though we are one position, though we have been made one in terms of the Holy Spirit's ministry and salvation and putting us into the body of Christ, though we are one in fact we are not one in terms of our activities or our actions. And we certainly are not one in Spirit and witness.

Christianity's testimony has been decimated because it has been fractioned and hacked up into pieces and you've got this little group over here and this little group over here and that big group over there and so forth and so on. And people stand up and say that we're this and we do that, it's all fractioned.

Consequently though we are one position, the world does not see us as one in practice and we do not have a singular testimony of humility and love. Now you know that if God wants us to be one that Satan wants us not to be one. And so while the prayer of Christ was that we would be one, while the activity of the Spirit was to make us one, all of the energy of Satan is to fraction us.

So whenever you come into situation where you or me or anybody else is a divisive issue, we can be assured that if it's in the body of Christ, that we are the agent of Satan because Christ wants to unify. Satan wants to divide. Now may I add just a footnote. There is no scriptural justification for the existence of all the present divisions of the church. You know there weren't any divisions denominationally in the New Testament, none at all.

In fact, all of the divisions of the church are totally and explicitly contrary to the straightforward teaching of the Word of God. The whole intention of Christ informing the body was that we may be one body. Not all fractioned into little parts. Now how was the body formed? Was it formed in discord or was it formed in unity? Obviously, it was formed in unity.

The book of Acts, the body of Christ, the church was formed in a prayer meeting in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem. The disciples of Jesus gathered to pray. Out of that faith and obedience and waiting in prayer, by a company of humbled disciples, God brought into being the church against which the gates of Hell can prevail. There in that prayer gathering in an upper room in Jerusalem the hour of another divine dispensation struck. And men and women filled with the Holy Spirit and possessing gifts of the Holy Spirit when down out of that room into the streets to preach Christ's crucified, risen, and the day of God's free grace.

It was a group of humble people. There weren't any great ones. There weren't any mighty ones. They didn't get an organizational structure. They just prayed and waited. Hardest thing in the world to do. They prayed and waited. God said to them through Christ, "The church will be born in Jerusalem." Christ had told them this, "Not only will it be born in Jerusalem, but you will evangelize the world."

Now had Christ said to the church today, "The church will born in Jerusalem, or something will happen in Jerusalem, and you will evangelize the world," immediately we would start master planning, organizing, get the committees going. Got to get a chairman, have an election. You know what they did? They just prayed and sat there. They didn't even have an evangelism committee.

And you know something else? They were told to begin world evangelism and they didn't begin it for seven years. You say it's terrible. No, they wanted a solid foundation. They wanted strong capable evangelists. It takes time. God said, "The church will begin at Jerusalem and you'll evangelize the world." And they prayed and they waited.

And when God's Spirit got ready to act, He could act through them, because they were already filled with the Spirit. And you know something, when they went out of that room, when the church began, all of them evangelized. And that's the way it ought to be. There is no believer who's not responsible to evangelize. Oh you may not have the specific gift of evangelism, but you are witnesses. Everyone of them went out of that room and publicly preached the wonderful works of God.

In fact, they did it by a divine miracle in a language they didn't even know. That was the birth of the church. That was the birth of the body of Christ. It was born in a prayer meeting where they prayed and waited. It was all on the energy of the Holy Spirit, and every member, every member, that was part of that prayer meeting was engaged in the activity, through the Spirit's power. And from that moment on, friends, every single member that's been added to the church, has been added the same way.

"For by one Spirit were you," what's the next word, "all baptized into one body." Every believer who's ever come to Jesus Christ since that birth of the church has come the same way by the Spirit of God's power placing him into the body of Christ. We are as singularly one today in 1971 as we were one in Acts 2. And everyone of us entered the body the same way.

Now that early church was fantastic. They were exciting. And the reason was this, they were all, now watch this, "they were all filled with the Spirit." Now can you imagine what would happen if a total church was filled with the Spirit. The energy of the Spirit would fire through that body and it would be devastating. That church was filled with the Spirit.

Secondly, they were all exercising their spiritual gifts. Thirdly, they were all preaching the gospel. Can you imagine that? All filled with the Spirit, all exercising their gifts, all preaching the gospel. And they had a unity of humble love that was manifest everywhere. The world was flabbergasted. They couldn't believe it. They gave such a tremendous witness that daily souls were added, weren't they? Daily, daily, daily, daily souls were added.

Now, bring it up to us. In order for us to be an effective witness as a body, as the early church was, we must be just as healthy as they were, right? We must also be not organized, Spirit filled. Not super committed. No, just exercising our spiritual gifts. And all preaching the gospel. We have to be just as healthy as the early church. The standard for us is no different at all.

Now, the pressure is different, right? You know what the missing ingredient in the church today is that makes it so hard for us to be like the early church? There's one missing ingredient. Do you know what it is? Persecution. You know what persecution does? It drives out, whoosh, all the terrors. It gets rid of them. Why if all of a sudden the United States government declared that Christianity was illegal and everybody who was a Christian was going to be shot, what do you think our attendance would be on Sunday?

And you know what we'd have? We'd have spirit-filled, redeemed, committed people. And all the rest would just fade by the wayside. Persecution really puts it down to the nitty gritty. See, and that's the thing we're missing. But the standards are no different. We have to be mature, functioning, loving, humble, spirit-filled, exercising our gifts, preaching the gospel just like that early church.

And you yeah, but we didn't have what they had. Oh yes, we do. The only thing we don't have is persecution, but brother we've got everything else, because you know what everything else was? One thing, the Holy Spirit. That was everything else. Now Christ wants the church to be powerful. He wants the church to be mature. He wants the church to be functioning. He wants the church to be growing. He wants the church to be witnessing and manifesting His love.

Now, in order to do that, now here we go, in order to do that God designed a plan within the confines of the church, His body. And I'm not talking about church building or an organized church, but the true church. All right, here was God's plan. In order to make the church really grow and really have a unified witness, God designed that every single member of His body, every believer, every Christian, every body member would have a certain function or functions within the body.

Now hang on to your hat. "Every Christian then has a function within the body that results," watch it, "in the health of the total body." In other words, if God designed it, we'd be a healthy body growing, maturing, functioning, witnessing, then every member has a ministry that lends itself to the health of that body.

Now the human body is the analogy and the human body has all kinds of organs that interact. All kinds of limbs that interact. If you have just one of your organs that doesn't function, then the whole body is sick. And the same thing is true of the body of Christ. Every organ has a function that results in the health or sickness of the whole body.

So every believer has a vital ministry as a vital organ of the body. And if the body is to be healthy and mature, and thus a single dynamic edified built up testimony to the world, then every believer must actively and intensely involve himself in the function which God has given him. Your service and your ministry makes the body healthy. Because it carries strength to the other vital parts of the body.

Your failure to serve on the other hand, your unfaithfulness, your carnality, your self-centeredness, your divisive spirit, your laziness spiritually are all non-functions. And non-functions make the body sick, crippled, and retard its health, its growth, and maturity. And as a result, they retard it's witness. God has designed you into the body as a vital functioning organ if you're a Christian.

You must, you must minister to the body if the body is to be healthy. Now God's will for the body is that we be like Christ. Christ likeness. That's His will for the body. In Ephesians 4:13, it says this, just listen, "Until we all come in the unity of the faith, unity of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man," watch this, "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of," whom, "Christ."

You know what our total body is to be? Like Jesus Christ. Is the total body like Christ? No, no. Is Christ divided? Paul said that didn't he? "Is Christ divided?" No. Is the body divided? Yes. Is the body like Christ? No. Is the body supposed to be like Christ? Yes. Why isn't the body like Christ? Because it's divided. Right. Why is the body divided? Because some members are non-functioning organs.

God's will for the body is that we be like Christ. You see here's what the point is folks, through the church, the body, Christ wants to manifest His own character. He wants to manifest His person through us, not only as individuals, and that's what he wants to do as individuals doesn't He? But as a body, He wants to manifest His person through the body of Christ. We are to be individually like Christ. We are to be in unity like Christ. And the method as I said to accomplish this Christ likeness is to give every member of the body a function that ministers to the rest of the body certain spiritual gifts that each of us have through which the Holy Spirit can manifest Himself to the whole body and bring the whole body to maturity and health.

Now, keep this thought in mind and you're going to have to think with me on this. It's not going to come easy. "All the gifts were in their fullest sense," now watch this, "complete in Christ." "All the gifts were in their fullest sense complete in Christ. The gift of preaching. Could Christ preach? Could He preach. The gift of teaching. Could He teach? Showing mercy? Could He show mercy? Helps, ruling, I don't care what the gift is, it was complete in Christ. And the reason He gave each member these different gifts is He wanted a composite Christ likeness. Do you see the point?

Every one of the gifts that we have was complete and perfect in Christ and He gives us as members these various gifts that we might be built up to the fullness of whom? Christ. You see? The Holy

Spirit didn't say, hmmm, gift, I...I'll take a couple of those. Have those ones. Well, there's a nice one. No, every single gift that the Holy Spirit gave to the church was a characteristic of Jesus Christ. And He was the totally complete and full person. Just like God wants the church to be.

And you as a believer, you want to know something, the only way you'll ever be that full stature man in Christ, is when you have all those gifts being ministered to you. Did you know that? You see, you'll never be like Jesus Christ until you characteristically have been built up in all the areas that He was built up in.

That's why I must minister my gift to you, because as I minister my gift to you it builds you up in that area. And though...let's say my gift is preaching, if I minister to you in the gift of preaching maybe you'll never have the gift of preaching. But you'll learn just from my ministering to you how to communicate on a better level. And so I've built you up in that way. Maybe your gift is showing mercy and you minister that gift to me and I learn a little more how to show mercy. And I'm built up in that area and pretty soon as every member ministers to each other we're all built up as individuals to be like Christ and to show forth all his attributes and then collectively as a body we manifest a total person of Christ.

So you see every spiritual gift was taken from the nature of Christ. And they are gifts given to His new body, the church, that we might individually be like him as the minister the gifts to us and that we might as a body be like Him functioning with all those various gifts.

Now these gifts, and the word in the New Testament, charismata means grace gifts, they're gifts of grace, you don't earn them. The more spiritual you get the more gifts you get? No, wrong. You don't earn them. They're grace gifts. They are so critical they are critical to the health of the body. And a sick body is a sick evangelist. And if we're going to reach the world, if we're going to reach down the street, if we're going to really have a testimony that is devastating, it'll only happen when we are one ministering in love to each other these gifts.

Friends, this is important stuff. Now, go to 1 Corinthians Chapter 12 if you're not already there. And I want to show you four things about the gifts, about spiritual grace gifts. First the importance of the spiritual gift. Secondly, the source of spiritual gifts. Thirdly, the power of spiritual gifts. Fourthly, the extent of spiritual gifts. The importance, the source, the power, and the extent.

Number one, the importance of spiritual gifts. Now we have already talked about this haven't we? Why are they important? Because the body can't be like Christ unless they're ministered. And we all grow up together in maturity and all these areas that characterize Christ. How can I say I am...I am like Christ. I have Christ likeness if I don't how to show mercy. If I don't know how to teach to some degree. And how can I know these things unless somebody who has that gift teaches me, right?

And you know, it's not a human capacity in which you use the gift. It's the Spirit through you teaching me. And we'll talk about that more. But basically see, they are important because unless we minister our spiritual gifts not in our energy, but in the energy of the Spirit, but unless we minister our spiritual gifts the body is not built up. If it's not built up, it's not like Christ, and I'm not like Christ and the prayer was that we would be like Him. And if we're going to have any witness in the world, it'll be when we're like Him.

All right, the importance of spiritual gifts. Verse 1, and that's the verse that we'll deal with, no other verse on this subject. The importance of spiritual gifts. "Now concerning spiritual gifts brethren, I would not have you ignorant." Now unfortunately people are ignorant. The Corinthians were grossly ignorant, and people today are ignorant.

Some people abuse the spiritual gifts. Some people have gone way out in left field somewhere. They've climbed a fence, they're out in a parking lot in the area of spiritual gifts. All strange things, you know, emphasizing the sign gifts, the miraculous gifts. And we often stand back and say oh look at them, they're...they're way out man. What's that weird thing? And so we just take spiritual gifts and file it some where. And as some are daily abusing spiritual gifts, we are guilty of neglecting them. It seems to be indifference on the one hand or fanaticism on the other hand and nothing in the middle.

And here Paul says, I don't want you to be ignorant brethren, I want you to know about spiritual gifts. The understanding of spiritual gifts is so critical to the life of the body of Christ and the testimony of the gospel and the world that it ranks with the cardinal essentials of salvation and the gospel.

Dear people, this is essential. It's not a passing fancy. It is one of the keys to all the revelation of God and to the ministry in the world today that you understand spiritual gifts. And this church right here, Grace Community Church, or any other church or the total body will never be what it could be. It will never be what Jesus prayed that it would be. It'll never be what the Holy Spirit gifted and empowered to be until we are no longer ignorant about spiritual gifts, but rather we understand them and we begin to use them in the energy of the Spirit. So we see the importance of Spiritual gifts don't we. Very, very important. If you don't understand spiritual gifts friend you are ignorant of a critical basic, God's revelation.

All right, secondly, the source of spiritual gifts, verse 11. We're passing 2 to 10, we'll come back. Verse 11, the source of spiritual gifts. Where do they come from? Verse 11, "But all these," and he's just referred to the spiritual gifts some of them, "worketh that one and the very same," whom, "Spirit, dividing to every man severally as," what are the next two words, "He will."

What is the source of spiritual gifts? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit. Where do the gifts come from? They come from the Holy Spirit. That's where they come from. And this is so clear in this verse, it's also clear that God is involved in Chapter 7 verse 7, it says, "I would that all men even as I myself, but every man hath his proper gift of God." God gives these gifts through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit then takes the various gifts and distributes them to the body member. The day that you were born into the family of God, the day that you receive Jesus Christ as your personal savior, the Spirit of God distributed to you a certain gift, and through those gifts, now watch it, here's the key, through those gifts, the Holy Spirit wants to minister to you and to the rest of the body.

Let me clarify it. Through those gifts, the Holy Spirit wants to minister through you to the body. Now, we'll talk more about that in a moment. A spiritual gift, we'll define it for you, a spiritual gift is a Spirit given ability which acts as a channel through which the Holy Spirit ministers to the body. You got it?

Say it again. The spiritual gift is a Spirit given ability which acts as a channel through which the Spirit ministers to the body. Did you get it? The spiritual gift is not end in itself is it? The spiritual gift is only the channel through which the Holy Spirit operates. Let me add a footnote, spiritual gifts have nothing to do with spirituality. Every believer has spiritual gifts. Even the back-slidden ones.

Because the spiritual gift doesn't mean you're spiritual. All a spiritual gift is is a Spirit given vehicle through which the Spirit can minister. The only question is whether the channel is clear or whether it's all plugged up. That's the only question. Spirit gifts are only Spirit given vehicles through which the Spirit of God ministers to the whole body. They are not signs of spirituality. You know, it's amazing how many people think that they have obtained some spiritual gift and they've gotten instant spirituality.

No, never has anything to do with spirituality. You can have all the gifts of the record of Scripture and it wouldn't mean you're spiritual. And would you please notice that it says at the end of verse 11 "The Holy Spirit divides to every man severally as He will."

It's also amazing to me that people think they can seek certain gifts. You can't. People think they can tarry for certain gifts. You can't do that either. The Holy Spirit gives them as He will to whom He will. Some of you even developed gimmicks and devices, little techniques to get certain gifts. And they try to generate artificial emotional and Satanic activity and then they call it the gifts of the Spirit. This goes on all the time. And it usually deals with the miraculous gifts, which we'll talk about in a little while, like tongues and so forth and so on.

I read a little pamphlet entitled Ten Easy Steps to Speaking In Tongues. And it started out by saying you say a certain word hit yourself on the chin. Now, that is the most ludicrous kind of biblical scholarship I've ever heard of. The Spirit of God is the source of these gifts, not some gimmick. Not

a little piece of paper that says ten easy steps to the gifts of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives the gift by divine will and divine choice. Not ours.

The Holy Spirit knows what gifts are needed. He knows where they're needed, when they're needed and who is to receive them to be ministered. And thus does He give them. And if each member uses His gifts, then there is a total complimenting and the work is accomplished to the glory of God as the body is built up.

You know, you can have the gift given by the Holy Spirit, and be doing nothing about it. It's interesting that a guy fell into that problem, and His name was Timothy. And Paul who had chased Timothy around like a mother hen constantly picking at him, which is a healthy thing to do, said to him in 1 Timothy 4:14, listen to this. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee." See he had the gift. Oh he'd become sidetracked by certain people who were pressuring him and he was becoming a little upset and he was even developing an ulcer, you know. And Paul told him to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. And he was really uptight.

And Paul says, "He Timothy, don't neglect the gift." He didn't lose the gift, he had it. He just neglected it. 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul puts it another way. Evidently, Timothy still wasn't doing too well. 2 Timothy 1:6, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God." See, get going Timothy. You've got it, use it.

Well, essentially beloved that's what I'm saying to you. You're a believer, you've got a gift, don't neglect it. Stir it up. Activate it in the energy of the Spirit. Now please notice that a gift is not a natural ability. You can't say my gift is making pie. That is not a gift to the Spirit. That's a wonderful gift. And I would be happy to verify whether or not you have that gift, but that is not the gift of the Spirit.

Some of you say well my gift is to do this kind of thing or my gift is to work with my hands or my gift is to sing and that...those are not spiritual gifts. Those are natural abilities. Now the spiritual gifts are sovereignly bestowed manifestations of the Spirit's power through a divinely given ability.

Let me illustrate it to you. Now no doubt the Apostle Paul was a graphic illustration of the difference between a true gift and just a physical ability. Now let me show you why. Paul obviously had natural ability to express himself publicly. He just was...he was glib, sharp, fast, really quick. He had a natural ability to talk. But it is perfectly clear, and I want you to mark this as critical to understand, it is perfectly clear that Paul never, now watch it, he never regarded his ability to talk as a gift of the Spirit. He was a man of tremendous learning. He could have used his knowledge of philosophy and literature and composed eloquent, convincing orations couldn't he. And he could have delivered with magnificent ability. But you know what Paul said, now watch it, he said this, 1 Corinthians 2:2, just listen. "I came not with surpassing skill of speech or wisdom for no knowledge did I purpose to

display among you, but the knowledge of Christ and Him," what, "crucify."

Do you see what Paul's saying? He's saying I have a natural ability to speak. I have a natural ability to communicate. I know philosophy. I took it all, stuck it over there and said Spirit speak through me. The Holy Spirit expresses Himself through man's powers. He uses a man's knowledge, but it is in a supernatural way apart from that man's own ability. And it's interesting about this, here's another way to illustrate it. There are a lot of people who have the gift of gab, and they aren't preachers. If a man has a natural aptitude along that line, maybe the Holy Spirit will elect to use it. Maybe He won't.

A gift or a manifestation of the Spirit is of the Spirit, not of the flesh. And you say, well look at so and so. Boy they can get up and they can just rattle off there and boy they're really, really fluent in their speech. Maybe God will put them in a totally different area in the body of Christ. Maybe they'll be ministering in a way that isn't even visible publicly and yet they may have the gift of gab.

On the other side, I had a friend in seminary, dear friend. He had the worst stuttering problem I have ever seen. So bad, and he and I were very close, but I used to say to him have you got 15 minutes, I'd like to have a five minute conversation with you. And...but he and I really were close and he...I said that in love and he understands. So don't think I was hard on because, we'll never forget that he got an A in pulpit speech and I got a B. But anyway, I'll never live that down. He gets me about that all the time.

But he had a very severe speech impediment, and your first reaction would have been that guy, no way does that guy belong in the ministry as a preacher. Today he's a preacher and a teacher. Pastor to church, he became beloved and he is one of the finest, expositors of the Word of God I have ever heard and he is one of the most lucid speakers I have ever heard and he stutters all the way from the beginning to the end of his message. But you know what, he may not have the fluent tongue physically, but brother he has the gift of preaching.

God may elect to use your natural ability. Then again, he may bypass and give you a gift that has no connection with your natural ability. And so when you talk about spiritual gifts, you're not relying upon physical power for the production of spiritual fruit, all that is is a hindrance. That's a pain in the neck to the Holy Spirit. And oh that's so clearly shown in so many places in the Bible.

I think of one that comes to my mind 1 Peter 4, I think it is. Yes 1 Peter 4:10, now here's the distinction. This is beautiful, very graphic. It's illustrating just what I've told you. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another." In other words, minister your gift, right? Minister your gift, 1 Peter 4:10. Now watch this, "If any many speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Did you know that some people can speak and not be speaking the oracles of God? Not be really exercising their gift. There's a difference between the ability to speak and the Spirit given gift of preaching.

So he says if you're going to speak, speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister let him do it as the ability which God giveth. Did you know that a man could have the ministering and still minister in the flesh? That's what it says. Do you know that a man could have the gift of preaching and still stand in a pulpit and preach in the flesh? I can verify that by personal experience. Just because you have the Spirit gift doesn't mean that every time you do that, you're doing it in the Spirit.

And so he says, "Let him do it as of the ability which," what, "God giveth." See, oh it's so easy. I look at my own life. It would be so easy for me to stand up in front of audience and just fire out and I could on forever. Right? Because I...I can talk and it must be a constant battle in my own heart and mind to speak not humanly, but as the oracles of God to bring my gift into subjection to the Holy Spirit, because I could minister my gift just as you can in the flesh.

And so you see the gift does not necessarily mean you're spiritual. It doesn't all. It doesn't have anything to do with spirituality. The gift is given by the Holy Spirit, not necessarily in accordance with what you think is your ability or your disability. Not only that, thirdly, you can minister your gift either in the energy of the Spirit or in the energy of the flesh. The fact that one has the gift, doesn't necessarily mean he ministers it in the Holy Spirit.

And the gift is no sign of spirituality. None at all. Just because I have gift of preaching, that doesn't make me spiritual. I have the same struggles with sin that you have. And sometimes I think my struggle is greater than yours must be, although maybe that's not true. But you know you have that. In 1 Corinthians 14:32, important statement. Gee, this is really important. 1 Corinthians 14:32 says this, "And the spirits of the prophets are," what, "subject to the prophets."

Do you know what that means? That even a prophet's got to subject his own spirit. Just because you've been called to be a preacher, it doesn't mean you don't have to subject yourself anymore. I'm not spiritual because I preach. I'm not even infallible. Verse 29 of 1 Corinthians 14, 1 Corinthians 14:29, look at what it says. "Let the prophets speak two or three and let others judge." Did you know that? Did you know that the prophets aren't even so infallible, they've got to have three people and somebody else judge who is right.

Some people think just because they got the gift that settles it. No, sir, even the prophets had to check with two or three, work it out together and have somebody judge who was right. Gifts are no sign of spirituality. They are no guarantee that you're always right. Gifts are not always necessarily in connection with your own supposedly abilities or disabilities. And you can minister your gift in the flesh or you can administer your gift in the Spirit.

Spiritual gifts are important. They are critically important. They are important because we saw them ranked with the cardinal gifts. The cardinal doctrines of salvation. They are important because

they're needed for a healthy body. The source of spiritual gifts, we just saw, was the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, let's look quickly at the power of spiritual gifts. The power of spiritual gifts, verses 2 through 6. Verse 2, "Ye know," talking to the Corinthians, "Ye know that ye were Gentiles carried away under those...under these dumb idols," it's dumb in the sense that they can't speak, "even as you were lead." And the word lead there was like leading a prisoner. He said to the Corinthians, you know, you Corinthians used to be in real sad shape going around worshipping dumb idols. Praying to gods who can't answer, see.

Really kind of a pathetic hopelessness in idol worship, isn't it? "Wherefore," verse 3 he says, "I give you to understand," because of your blindness and your incapacity as idol worshippers, "that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus a curse. And that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by," whom, "the Holy Spirit."

Now, because the Corinthians had such a fouled up background in idol worship, they could know nothing about Christianity and they could know nothing about spiritual gifts, except the Holy Spirit teach them. Why Paul says you couldn't even know something as basic as the Lordship of Christ unless the Holy Spirit told you about it.

Remember what Peter said? "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And what did Jesus say? "Flesh and blood has not revealed that unto you. My Father in heaven." You can't know the Lordship of Christ apart from the Holy Spirit. He says Corinthians, I don't want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts, but I know this, you couldn't know about Him because you couldn't even know the basics. You couldn't know about spiritual gifts, you could even know about step one the Lordship of Christ apart from the Holy Spirit.

The flesh is incapable of knowing anything. It's the natural man can't even understand the Lordship of Christ how could the natural man understand the work of the Holy Spirit through spiritual gifts. He never could. Spiritual understanding and spiritual work can only be done by the power of the Spirit. Well, who is the power then of spiritual gifts? The Holy Spirit. What did Jesus say? "Ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Who then is the power for understanding? Who is the power for operating spiritual gifts? The Holy Spirit.

That's thrilling. That is absolutely thrilling. I mean, do you grab that? Whatever we do in our flesh is a waste. Whatever we do in our own...in our own flesh in our own fashion and our own will and our own design if failure and mockery. But...but, and get this, whatever I do when I'm filled with the Holy Spirit, whatever I do as I exercise my gift in His power, is born along by divine energy. Fantastic thought.

Just to think that I can minister with divine energy. Wow, so can you. In the service of the body, you can activate divine energy. Isn't that exciting? You're not just floating around trying to grunt and groan and build up your own strength and, you know, no, you just say Spirit of God fill me and divine energy flows to the body as you minister.

So in the service of the body every members gift can only be exercised in the energy of the Holy Spirit if it is to be effective. If you operate in the energy of the flesh, you might as well not operate. Anything you do in the flesh is a Satanic counterfeit. And you know that's exactly what was going on in Corinth. They had counterfeited all the gifts. They didn't lack any gift, but through carnality, they had quenched and grieved the Holy Spirit and no power was coming through and the Corinthian part of body was sick, sick, sick.

You say well, I'd like to operate my gift in the energy of the Spirit. I'd really like to have the Spirit of God moving out through me. That'd be absolutely fabulous. How do I do it? Real simple. Is it? Yeah. Four easy steps. There are four basic principles. How can you really operate in the energy of the Spirit? Number one, prayer, prayer, prayer, prayer. You know what prayer is? God, I want to operate in the energy of the Spirit. God, I want to operate in the energy of the Spirit. Constantly bearing that message to God. Ask Him to cleanse your life to use you in the energy of the Spirit.

Number two, "Yield yourselves," Romans 6, "as instruments of," what, "righteousness." God here's my body, myself for righteous thoughts, righteous deeds.

Third thing, Ephesians 5, "Be filled with the Spirit." You say, what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? It means to allow the Spirit of God to permeate every part of you. It means to turn every decision, every thought, every attitude over the Spirit's control. Oh the spirit-filled life is fantastic. You say well that'll be great. I'm going...I'm going to get down and I'm going to pray oh Holy Spirit fill me. And when He fills you how long does it last? It lasts just as long as the moment you asked Him. That's why the Greeks says be being kept filled with the Spirit. It's constantly yielding to the Holy Spirit. One thing at a time. One thing at a time.

You know, you get up in the morning and you say Holy Spirit, I'm Yours. The next thing you know, Satan comes along and starts tempting you. Whoosh, out of here Satan. Holy Spirit, I'm yours. I yield to you. Fill me, what do you want me to do? Which way do you want me to go? Filling you with the Holy Spirit is nothing more than living conscious of the Spirit's control of your life, that's all. And turning every decision over to Him.

So prayer, yield to this as instruments of righteousness filled with the Spirit, Galatians 5, the fourth one, walk in the Spirit. One step at a time. One step at a time. One step at a time. Now we'll tape messages on each of these aspects in the future and cover exactly what each of them means. But suffice it to say at this point that the Spirit is our energy.

The guarantee that you are functioning in the charismata, the grace gift and not a counterfeit is to be filled with the Spirit. That's the key. Why when the early church wanted men to lead, they found men who were full of what? The Holy Spirit. They chose men who were full of the Holy Spirit. That's the need of every body member folks. All we need to do is be filled with the Spirit. Let the Spirit of God have every part of our life. Every dimension of our life. We'll see that when we get to Ephesians 5 in more detail.

Verse 4 to 6, here he explains the energy of the Spirit. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit operating through all of them, there are differences of administration, but the same Lord. There are diversities of operations, but it's the same God who works all in all." You notice the Trinity? The Spirit, the Lord, and God.

They're all working within us, but the energy is the Spirit's energy. We are on divine power source folks. We're plugged into the Trinity. I mean, that's exciting. Can you imagine how it would be to be running around on batteries? We are plugged into divine energy. You're not just some little insignificant ball of flesh romping around for 60 years. You are plugged in to divine power and that power should surge through your spiritual gift to touch the body and make it healthy that it's witness might be healthy.

This is something beyond belief. I'll tell you. We actually operate on divine power supply. And when you minister your spiritual gift, man the juice is really shooting through. The power is there friend and you know something else, the gift is there. The only thing that may not be there is yieldedness on your own part.

I'll tell you something, very honest, personally I wouldn't want the responsibility of being the crippler of the body of Christ. No thanks. I don't think that I want to be the reason Christ's prayer for oneness isn't answered. I want to operate my gift. So we see the importance, the source, and the power of spiritual gifts.

Very quickly, I want to show you the extent of them. Verse 7 to 10, the extent of spiritual gifts and by that I mean two things. To what extent do believers them and how many are there and what are they? And we'll cover this very quickly.

Verse 7, "That the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit." How many believers have the gifts? Every man. All of them. They all have them. They are vehicles given to every believer through which the Spirit manifests Himself to the body. And you notice, isn't it terrific that it says that we profit, "given to every man to profit." But it's not only...it's not a reflexive to profit themselves. We not only profit by the exercise of our gifts because we're being used by God, but the rest of the body profits. That's a fantastic thing.

Now let me show you how this works. "As I minister my gift to you, you profit and you grow strong with me." And so all the gifts work together for a total perfect man. Where you lack, I'm gifted and I can minister to you. Where I lack, you're gifted. You can minister to me.

Now watch it, by your constant ministry to me, I will be built up in my weaker areas, my non-gift areas. I may never have the gift that you have, but I'll be built up in that area because of the ministry of your gift in that area to me. And even though I have no grace gift there, that area is strengthened until I grow to maturity in all areas. And still even though I'm mature in all areas, I'll have some special gifts that stand out.

So you see your ministry of gifts holds me up and builds me up. And my ministry to you builds you up. You may not have the gifts that I have, but my gifts can build you up in that area to a full perfect man. So we are both strong and healthy when we minister to each other.

Now, how many gifts are there? Well, there's some listed in the 12th Chapter of Romans and more in the 4th Chapter of Ephesians, and here's a few here. Verses 8 to 10, these are the ones that are in our passage. There's also some over there in verse 28. We're not going to study all of them tonight, but let me just read verses 8 to 10. Here's a few of them. "For the one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom." Some people have the gift of wisdom. "To another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit." See there's still unity and diversity. "To another faith by the same Spirit." That's another gift. "To another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. To another the working of miracles. To another prophecy. To another discerning the spirits. To another various kinds of tongues. To another the interpretation of tongues.

Now there you have a list of gifts. Now by no means, friends, are those all the gifts. They aren't. They aren't all the gifts. And friends if the church is to be built up, if the power from on High is to be manifest, we've got to find our gift by prayer and yieldedness and we've got to minister our gift to each other.

Let's bow in prayer. Our Father we just feel like our minds have been bombarded with truth. Lord, I trust your Spirit in giving this tonight. It was of You that I have indeed spoken the oracles of God and not of my own flesh. God you know how this message has burned in my heart for these people. And Lord I just pray right now that you'll take it and apply it to their hearts. Oh God may we minister in the energy of the Spirit. God may we this week by prayer and the Word of God looking up these verses just get down on our knees before You and seek to know our gifts and minister. Thank you Lord for teaching us tonight. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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