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

Concerning Spiritual Gifts, Part 1
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1
Code: 1848

This morning you might want to 1 Corinthians Chapter 12 and look at verse 1 with me, because that's the verse we're going to get to study this morning. And we have a very, very important study that we're entering into this morning. One of the most interesting important and controversial sections of Scripture and it is that relative to spiritual gifts. And as we study this what has become really the most controversial or the greatest rift in evangelicalism today interpreting the meaning of the use of spiritual gifts, I want us to have a full understanding. So we're going to pursue it very much from the teaching aspect rather than preaching and really dig into it and be concerned about supporting each position and each view carefully. Because I have the feeling that this is going to be very definitive for our fellowship and for many others around the nation and around the world that will be hearing this by tape.

Nothing has been more abused in our modern time and nothing more misunderstood in evangelicalism than this whole area of spiritual gifts. And it is critical that we understand it because it is absolutely vital to the life of the church. There is nothing that is any more vital apart from the divine energy of God, Himself, than the ministry that the believers have by way of their spiritual gifts. So they're endowments from God for ministry. Some people think, of course, that the church is a visible religious organization that is governed by a hierarchy of sort of semi-official tight people. Other people think that the church is an efficient social or quasi-social agency that's supposed to pass out things to the community when they community needs them.

Other people think that the church is that thing across the street that they keep building that we would like to stop them from building. And other people think that the church is a useful place to go if you die or have a wedding or have a baby or want to get baptized or whatever. Some people think that the church is nothing more than a social club, a group of people who all agree about the same things religiously and they get together and have parties about it. And I suppose in some sense there's an element of truth in all of those views. But may it be established at the very beginning of our study that biblically the church is a living organism. It is the body of Christ and Christ is the head of that living body.

It is the fullness of Him that fills all in all. And the church is not a human institution. And it is not an earthly organization. It is an organism and as such, it is eternal. The church cannot die and that is its property that gives us the understanding that it is eternal. That it is supernatural. Its head is Christ who lives forever. It's members are believers who have been given eternal life. In Matthew 16 Jesus

said the "The gates of hell cannot destroy the church." It is indestructible, eternal, and supernatural.

As such it is an organism. And it's supernatural character I think becomes manifest in many ways. We worship a supernatural god. We believe in a supernatural intervention in a human history in terms of the revelation of the Bible. Another supernatural intervention into human history in terms of the living Christ. We believe in a supernatural Holy Spirit who indwells us. We are the result of a supernatural transformation that has made us new creatures. And we have been given by the Holy Spirit a supernatural endowment of gifts by which we can minister within the organism to the building and edifying of that church till it comes to the fullness of the stature of Christ and has a powerful witness in the world. That's the church.

And because the church has been endowed by the Spirit of God with supernatural gifts for its ministry of edification and evangelism, they then become critical to its operation. That is why we must understand spiritual gifts and that is why we must understand that Satan counterfeits them. He counterfeits them because they are absolutely necessary to the life and functioning of the church. The church is not a spectator sport. The church is not a professional pulpitism financed by lay spectators who sit there and watch it happen. The church is a living, breathing organism that functions as life and breath. And it is functioning on the basis of the ministry of each member within that church to minister to the other and that's why it's seen as a body. And everyone of us is like a member of that body. We have a function in harmony and symphony with every other member.

And so it's critical that we understand how it works, how we operate within it, how the spiritual gifts function in order that the church might be built up. And that we understand when Satan counterfeits it, how it is recognizable that it is a counterfeit. In fact, that we're seeing not the genuine gift and that its end result will not be to build the church, but to tear it down. And there's some tearing going on today and we want to make sure you understand the distinction.

Now there are many questions that surround spiritual gifts, all of which we will be answering as we study Chapter 12, 13, and 14. Now we're not going to be able to cover it all in one session. You know that. The Lord would not want us to do that, but we will cover one verse today and then over the next four or five years, we will finish. No, we'll try to hurry a little bit. But let me say that I must deal deeply and basically with an introduction or you won't have any idea where we're going. So it's important. And as I said we're going to carefully, verse by verse, word by word deal with grammar and context and history and everything there is in order to get the right answer.

And some of the questions that we're going to be answering are what are spiritual gifts? How many are there? Are they important? How many do I have? How do I get them? How do I know what they are? Can I seek certain gifts. How do I understand the purpose of gifts? What about miraculous gifts like languages and healing. Are they still in operation? What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Does every Christian possess the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Are all the gifts still in operation. If not,

which ones and how did they cease and why? What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? What is the gift of languages? What is the gift of healing? Have some gifts ceased? Can the gifts be counterfeited? What is the most important gift and on and on and on?

All of those questions we want to deal with know that we might understand the subject. Now remember the situation of the Corinthian church because that is basic to an understanding of the whole picture here. Now we've done this all the way through 1 Corinthians, so we're not departing from any other technique. This is the normal process of what we call historical, grammatical interpretation. We have to know what was said. We have to know what was meant by it in the time in which it was said and so we've got to reconstruct some history.

Now you'll recall what we've learned in our study is that the church was established, the Corinthian church by the apostle Paul during his second missionary journey. It's establishing as recorded in the 18th Chapter of Acts. He spent 18 months there and during that 18 months he established the saints, he built up the church, he fought his enemies and then at the end of that time he left. They then had other pastors who came to minister to them with some distinction. Paul's ministry just being foundational.

But not long after Paul left, severe moral and spiritual problems developed in the Corinthian church, so severe that this first letter to the Corinthians deals exclusively with these problems. You say well where did Paul find out about the problems. Well, he had three basic sources regarding these problems. Source number one was in Chapter 1 verse 11 where he said some of the household of Chloe came and told them about them. So source number two is at the end of 1 Corinthians 16:17 says, "I'm glad for the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus for that which was lacking on your part, they have supplied. So here are three people who came from the Corinthian assembly with information regarding the church.

So from the house of Chloe and from Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus and thirdly apparently those three folks brought a letter which further asked questions. Chapter 7, verse 1 introduces a section to us when it says now concerning the things about which you wrote unto me. So from these three particular sources, the apostle Paul was informed about the problems that were going on in this assembly. In response to the letter, the information from Chloe and the three others he begins in the 1st Chapter to write and solve these problems at least on paper and give them information so that they can solve them in actuality.

Now just to remind you about some of the problems, it is inconceivable that anyone church would have manifested to the fullness all of these problems, but the Corinthian church did. For example, they had divisions every way you could cut it. They were divided about human opinion of little picky things. They were divided over human philosophers. They were divided over human wisdom. They had human personality cults and cliques. They manifested carnality. They were sexually perverted

so that in the congregation was both fornication and incest. There was worldliness, preoccupation with the things of the world. They were suing each other. There was rebellion against apostolic authority. There was a failure to discipline. There was marital conflict. There were conflicts in the area of the single people. There was abusive liberty. There was idolatry, selfishness, pride, demon worship. The insubordination of women. Abuses of God's intended roles for men and women. Abuses of the Lord's Supper. Abuses of the love feasts and add to that folks, abuses and perversions of spiritual gifts. That's the context in which 12-14 is written.

It isn't any different than anything else in the whole letter. It's just right in line with all the other things that were going on in the Corinthian assembly. Just as they had perverted everything else, they were perverting this dimension of their life. Now if you study it carefully you will find, and as we have, you will recognize this that they had managed to drag into the church life all of the features of their former pagan existence. They had not made a clear cut separation, they had not come out from among them and been separate. They had not ceased to handle unclean things. They had dragged them all into the assembly.

And even though they were rich in spiritual gifts, Chapter 1, verse 7 says "So that you come behind in no gift." In other words, they had everything. They lacked nothing. They had a fullness of the gifts. In spite of all of that, with all the knowledge that they should have had, with all the gifts that they did have, they were ignorant of how they should function. Especially regarding the gift of languages, modern day called tongues. But biblically the word is languages.

Further, in Corinth a concept of the Holy Spirit was dominating and that concept that dominated their thinking confused the Holy Spirit with ecstatic, enthusiastic in the true sense of the Greek word activity. For example, to them, somebody who stood up and gave an utterance whether it was a language or whether it was a prophecy or whether it was an interpretation or whatever it was, somebody who gave an utterance seemed to be more godly the more wild the utterance was. The more miraculous it appeared so that the gift of languages became the one that was exploited if you will. The ecstatic speaking that went on as if it were the true gift of languages was then given credence as the highest degree of spiritual maturity because it demonstrated that the greatest manifestation of an outside power.

And it couldn't be identified with any normal faculty of man. So they tended to lean toward what which was more bizarre and more far out. Now this carnal concept was a remnant of their unsaved, idolatrist days when ecstatic utterances made by pagan priests and worshipers under the control of a demon were thought to be the highest level of religious experience. That's the kind of culture they lived in. And this had been dragged into the assembly. Now from the very start the Holy Spirit had been doing amazing things in their midst. He was at work. The gifts were there as I said in concert, ready for a divine symphony of body life to the edifying of the church. There were tremendous things that the Spirit of God had done in the founding days and they had seen Him manifest. But in that age

in which they lived, an age when religion was connected with ecstasy and frenzy and bizarre things, that kind of hysterical enthusiasm and extremism that existed in their pagan religion got dragged into the church and became a delusion regarding the work of the spirit.

Now in their culture, they had a kind of religion that we call the mystery religions. And the mystery religions had as characteristic of their function these kinds of frenzies and ecstasies and enthusiasms that went on. And it was easy for them in their carnal state when these things infiltrated the church to confuse them with the true gifts of the Holy Spirit. And this is exactly what happened. And it isn't surprising, not at all.

Let me show you why it isn't surprising. In their church, for example, there were divisions. Where did those divisions come from? They came because they dragged into the world, the things that they had held to before they were saved. For example, we said remember when we studied way back in the first three chapters that the Corinthians were enamored with philosophers? They all sort of rallied around this philosopher or this philosopher or this one and so they learned in their culture to have sort of personality cults. They would worship one philosopher as over against another. So when they came into the church, they did the same thing. I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephus, I am of Christ.

They created more personality cults. In their pagan kind of life, they also identified around different philosophies. And they used to argue philosophy. This was a big thing in Greek culture to argue philosophy. It was sort of an intellectual stance and when they got into the church they did that. They argued about the words of human wisdom. Remember Chapter 2 where Paul says I didn't come to you with human wisdom. And human wisdom doesn't leave you anywhere. And the natural man with all of it's human wisdom can't understand the things of God. Well, that's what happened, they dragged all their human philosophies and their human personality cults. That same mentality into the church and so they polarized.

You remember too that the name of the city Corinth became a verb. There was a certain thing identified with the city that it literally became a verb. The verb to Corinthianize, and to Corinthianize means to go to bed with a prostitute. When somebody thought of Corinth that's what they thought of because that's the kind of culture they lived in. So what happens in the church? They dragged that same morality into the church didn't they? And in Chapter 5, you've got a person who is having sex relations with his mother or his stepmother. You've got people who are joining themselves to prostitutes in Chapter 6. The same thing they had known in their pagan life, they dragged into their assembly in the church.

Another thing, we learned in Chapter 6 that the Corinthians loved to go to court. It was kind of a sport to go to court and dialogue and all that. They just loved it. So when they became Christians, what did they do to each other. They sued each other. Again, dragging the same mentality from the world

into the assembly of believers. Another thing we see in their society was the terrible decline and the fouling up of marriages. Chapter 7 deals with fouled up marriages in the church because you have the same problems there. They drag them right in from the world.

We found out later in Chapters 8,9, and 10 that they had a terrible time abusing their liberty. Why? Because they had come from existential society where anything goes. And they came into the church and they started doing whatever they wanted no matter how it affected anybody and Paul says you can't do that in the church. You have to limit your liberty for the sake of another. We've studied a little bit about feminism and their culture and how there was a feminist revolution and it came into the church too and women wouldn't wear veils in the church or women wouldn't be covered in the church, which was the symbol of modesty.

You see everything that was culturally a part of their life because they were carnal manifested itself in their church, you see. So if all of that is there why wouldn't we assume that the pagan style of religion would also manifest itself in their assembly under their carnality. Of course it would. That is precisely what happened. The world's religion came right in infiltrated the life of the church and they began to do the things within the confines of Christianity with new definitions and new terms to try to make it look right that they were doing essentially before they ever knew Christ. And calling them gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Now let me tell you a little bit about their religion. They worshipped under a system known as the mystery religion. For over a thousand years these religions dominated western culture and we still have the remnants with us now operating in Europe and in the Roman Catholic church all over the world. The remnants of the mystery religions. There were many forms of the mystery religions. They found all different categories and all different forms, but they can all be traced back to a single origin. To show you that, I want you to look at Revelation 17, verse 5.

And we need to understand this. It's worth our time to get a grip on it, so we're going to take a little while on this. It's discussing here the final form of world religion, in the tribulation, at the end of the tribulation, the true church is gone and the world begins to establish a form of religion. There is a composite form of world religion comes together under one heading. And that form is called in verse 5, mystery Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. The final form of world religion is called mystery Babylon. The mystery religions came out of Babylon so that all, now watch it, all false worship stems back to the tower of Babel. And so when it all comes together at the end, it is just a final form of the Babylon false system.

And notice that mystery Babylon, that is the false religion that begin at the tower of Babel is the mother of all other false systems. The true church is the bride, the false one is a what? A harlot. So the harlot religious system, the false religion systems were spawned, they were mothered by Babylon. And they will regroup again in the end time, all in one category, all the false systems of the

world are spawned out of the evil system that came at the tower of Babylon.

Now listen, the tower of Babel was man's first sophisticated, organized, counterfeit of true religion. Genesis 10, the first sophisticated and organized counterfeit of true religion occurred in Genesis 10 at the tower of Babel. They built this tower to God and Nimrod was the patriarchal apostate who set it all up. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, and he set the whole thing up. And they established a false system of religion. As a counterfeit to the truth and every system since then, mark this, was spawned out of that.

Why? Because when God judged those people what did He do to them? He scattered them all over the world and they took with them the seeds of false religion begun at Babel. They adapted it, they altered it, they sophisticated it even more. They changed it here and there. They added to it so that it became complex and varying in varying cultures. But the seeds of it all were at Babel. That's why mystery Babylon here is called the mother of all false systems. Now Nimrod then spawned a network of false religious systems. And that's when you go around the world, you find so much similarity in these false systems. And Nimrod had a wife, which was bad for Nimrod because she was a very, very evil person. Her name was Semiramis. Have you heard that name?

Semiramis the I just to distinguish her from anybody else who may have that name. Semiramis the I, now she was the first high priestess of the tower of Babel religion. She really founded what is known today as the mystery religions. She was the mother of it all. And now when God scattered these people they took with them Semiramis' system. And in different countries, you remember God not only scattered but He changed their what? Their languages. So then she got all different names because different cultures have different languages and that means different pronunciations and different names.

So in Assyria she was called Ishtar. In Phoenicia her name was Ashteroth. In Egypt her name was Isus. In Greece her name is Aphrodite. And in Rome her name Venus. It's all the same Semiramis. They're worshiping Semiramis, the priestess that spawned false religion. She also gave birth to a son. This is the bologna that came out of the mystery religion. She didn't really give birth to a son in the way she claimed. But she gave birth to a son who's name was Tammuz. Tammuz, you can even read his name in the Bible in Ezekiel. In Phoenicia his name was Baal. Same person. In Egypt Osirus. Remember of Isus and Osirus in Egypt. In Greece his name was Aeros. And in Rome his name was cute little loveable cupid.

That's Baal. Let me tell you something about him. She said that he was conceived by a sunbeam. You know why, because that's a counterfeit to what? The virgin birth. He had no earthly father. He was conceived by a sunbeam. Isn't it amazing that clear back at the tower of Babel if the rest of the world doesn't understand Genesis 3:15, Satan did. He knew there was a seat of a woman and this phony one. And amazingly enough Tammuz or Baal or cupid or Aeros or whatever you want to call

him Osirus was killed by a wild boar and 40 days later rose from the dead.

You want to know where lent comes from? It doesn't come from the Bible it comes from the 40 days that Semiramis mourned for Baal. Now that's part of the mystery marriage between Babylonian mystery religions and Romanism. Or Christianity that became Romanism. So here you have this very sophisticated system that spreads all over the world. Well, you come to Greece and they're going to know about it. They're going to be in the same thing worshipping the same system with some sophistication. And that's precisely what they did. They had all kinds of sophisticated rights and rituals, many, many things.

Let me just give you a few items. They believed in baptismal regeneration. That's interesting to check that source too. They believe that people were saved by being baptized in water. So they had systematic baptisms. They also believed in sacrificial systems, so they slaughtered pigs and lambs and dogs and birds mainly. They had feasts and fasts. They believed in mutilations and flagellations. If you wondered where that came from, it didn't come from the Bible it came from the mystery system. Because later on the whole Babylonian system moved to Rome historically and it was there waiting until the church developed and married with it. They believed in pilgrimages. They believe in public confession. They believed in offerings, religious ablutions to pay for sin. They believed you had to give...you had to pay for your sin.

There was one...one of the mystery religion systems in Greece that said you had to go dunk yourself X-number of times and hold yourself under ice cold water that was cut in a frozen lake to get rid of your sin. You had to crawl...one other one was you had to crawl so far on bleeding knees. Listen, I saw that in a Roman Catholic church in Mexico City. Where did it come from? It came from this system which infiltrated Christianity in terms of Rome. Now among all these other things and we could really have a long discussion about all those things, there's one thing that was characteristic of the mystery religions that found it's way into Greece and this is all historically verifiable and that is that they had indulged in what they call ecstasy.

Now ecstasy is not what you feel when you kiss your girlfriend. That is not what we're talking about. You say when you say ecstasy, ecstasus, what is that? What do you mean? Ecstasy to somebody involved in the mystery religions was cultivating a magical sensuous communion with deity. In other words, you do anything you could do to get yourself in a sort of a semiconscious hallucinatory sort of hypnotic spell where you would sensually commune with a deity and you would have a euphoric kind of feeling. Almost an anesthesia would take place.

And they assumed that that was a union with God. Let me quote from S. Angus who has a significant book entitled The Mystery Religions in which he writes as a historian. Very objectively about it and these things are not some obtuse discoveries. This is normal routine well-known fact about these systems. And I'm going to take the time to read you some things so that you'll understand how this

operated because it's the basis of the mess in Corinth. Listen, the person, this is describing ecstasy. "The person was brought into a mystic, ineffable condition in which the normal functions of personality were in abeyance." Okay? "And the moral strivings which form character virtually ceased or were relaxed while the emotional and intuitive were accentuated."

Now here's a situation where a person gets into a condition where his personality becomes abnormal, where his normal morality is set aside that he indulges in orgies or whatever, and where his brain goes into neutral and emotion takes over. This ecstasy. These states were ecstasy, ecstasus, and in enthusiasm, enthusiasmos, and that's not like we think of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm in our society means something different. My mother used to serve us dinner. It was always leftover, you know, and we'd say we had enthusiasm for dinner because she put everything she had into it. And that's we define enthusiasm. We define enthusiasm as something really giving it your all, but that is not the Greek term. It is a state of euphoria induced on someone so that you become semiconscious.

Now, they were able to do this, he goes on. "Both of which might be induced by vigil and fasting, tense religious expectancy, whirling dances, physical stimuli, the contemplation of the sacred objects, the affect of stirring music, inhalation of fumes, revivalistic contagion," that's just sort of mob frenzy. "Such has happened in the church at Corinth," he notes. "Hallucinations, suggestion and all other means belonging to the apparatus of the mysteries." I'm going to stop there for a minute. You see what he's saying?

They could induce it through lots of ways, by vigil and fasting, that's contemplative. By tense religious expectancy, whipping people into some kind of anticipation. And I see this sometimes in an absolutely overemphasized, unrealistic expectation of the second coming where people lose the rational approach to life and they give over to a totally emotional response to that undue dealing with something like that. And then he talks about stirring the effect of stirring music. Certain music was used. Inhaling certain fumes such as incense and so forth that some do today to create a euphoric state and on and on.

Now these, continuing quote, "these two kindred abnormal states of consciousness often indistinguishable are united by Proclus when he speaks of men "going out of themselves to be holy established in the divine and to be in rapture." So they were able to do this through these means in ecstasy further the devotee was lifted above the level of his ordinary experience into an abnormal consciousness of an exhilarating condition in which the body ceased to be hindrance to the soul. Ecstasy might of a passive character resembling a trance or an active orgiastic character of excitation resembling what Plato calls divine frenzy. According to the means of induction, the temperament of the initiant and his spiritual history, ecstasy might range any where from none moral delirium to that consciousness of oneness with the invisible and the dissolution of painful individuality which marks the mystics of all ages."

Now, that's a very important paragraph. He's saying there this that the...in ecstasy a person can go into all different kinds of responses in trance like ways. For example, have you ever seen the guru that crosses his legs and sits there and sort of goes into oblivion. That's a form of ecstasy. And it can be created in the mind. The Buddhist, for example, his ultimate aim in life is to enter Nirvana. Nirvana is where you sink into a state of total nothingness. You contemplate yourself out of existence. Such a total trance are you in that you don't come out of it.

On the other hand, you have the whirling diverses and the mad wild frenzy of ecstasy that you see in other kinds of religion that ends up in orgies. This goes way back to Baal even, doesn't it? Same thing. You see it even today. You see maybe somebody who's "slain in the spirit" where they go flat out into a trance. Or other people who are acting bizarre. They used to call them the holy rollers. Running up and down wildly friends and you see the stirring of this kind of thing. Further he says, "in ecstasy in the freeing of the soul from the hampering confinement of the body, in its communion with the deity powers arise within it of which it knows nothing in the daily life hampered by the body. It now becomes free as spirit. To hold communion with spirits. Also released from transitency it is endowed with capacities to behold what only the eyes of the spirit can behold that which is removed beyond time and space."

Now listen to that folks, this euphoria creates a tremendously good feeling. And people say this is fantastic and they would say we have communed with the deity and folks that is exactly what people today are saying and they're saying it's a result of certain gifts of the Holy Spirit and their conclusion is well I felt so good I've never felt this way before. It's got to be God. Listen, I know people who could stick cocaine up their nostrils and feel better than those people feel. Or who could smoke dope or could shoot heroin. That is not the criteria.

There are drunks who've never been so happy. That is not the answer. But what happens is this artificial euphoria is created and then the assumption is made that you must have connected up with God. You see? Well, if you think that is a must in Christianity you better know that is the same feeling that the pagans got when they did it their way. Totally apart from anything Godly. "Further, physically," says Angus, "the condition was one of anesthesia. Unconscious of pain or of anything hostile or disconcerting in the surroundings." I'm going to stop there. Unconscious of pain. Have you ever notice somebody who goes to a healer with terrible pain who walks away feeling nothing. Only a day later to be in agony again. Because there is created a euphoric anesthetic response in the mind.

"There's ample evidence," for example, says Angus, that the Bahki, and you've heard of the cult of Bahkus, the orgy and the wine drinking we saw when we were in Balbeck. We saw the temple to Bahkus, an incredible place. But, "there's ample evidence that the Bahki, for example, were insensate to pain and indued with supernatural strength. So were the priests of Sabiland the priests and priestesses of Mah. This anesthesia to pain is a religious phenomenon known in all ages

especially in great revivals and in many forms from that of the India yogi on to martyrs whose ecstasy took away the terrors of agonizing death by imparting miraculous fortitude. We may assume that this semi-physical, semi-psychic state was much coveted by the initiates." Well, sure that's what they were seeking in these false religions. "To be lifted above sense, to behold the beatific vision, to become incorporate in God was the end sought in ecstasy and the satisfaction sought or derived was a various kinds physical, sensual, esthetic and intellectual."

Now that's ecstasy, enthusiasm was the kindred state of communion often accompanying and confused with ecstasy. He goes on. "Under enthusiasm were included by the Greeks all forms of mantic," that's magical formulas, "prophesies, soothsaying, revelations and dreams and visions, such revelations being the direct utterances of the deity." That was enthusiasm. The deity speaking through them. In all forms of enthusiasm there is the same underlying idea that God is involved.

Now you see those two things made up the system of religion in which the Corinthians had lived and grown. Now when they became believers it was very much like them, because they were not spiritual, but what? Carnal to manifest the same type of behavior religiously as they dragged every other dimension of the world into their assembly. So their kind of religion was ecstatic, orgiastic, frenzy, it was chaotic, it was confusing and Paul says look, for one thing let everything be done what? Decently and in order and another thing, let it be done to edifying and in Chapter 14 he gives them rules to change the whole pattern on how they're doing it.

Let me give you...let me say you're a visitor in Corinth and you say to your wife, "Wife, let's go to church today. We've got today and let's attend the First Church of Corinth. Oh wonderful. Let's go there and have our hearts blessed." So you go and you arrive at wherever they meet and they must have met somewhere. Wherever they met, you go in and you're right on time, but all the rich people have already been there an hour and finished the love feast. And there's nothing left for you or all the poor who are just arriving because they get there later from work because they have to work harder. And the rich are over in the corner eating the food real fast so there won't be any left for the poor at the love feast.

And you go in and you notice that they're not only gluttonous in the corner, but they're stoned. They're bombed, they're drunk. They're over there having a terrific time. And all the poor people are sitting on the other side of the room with their stomachs gnawing saying those rich people, those dirty...they don't...what kind of a love feast and you've got a great division. And then somebody brings up a certain issue and they argue about it. And they hassle about it. And the drunks are loud and obnoxious. And you're saying to yourself this is a funny church we're in. And then somebody says it's now time for the Lord's Supper and they abuse it. They drink too much of it and they eat it up, because you see the poor haven't had anything yet.

And it turns into a mockery and when that's done they go into the regular service and everybody stands up and starts yelling and hollering and talking at the same time and people are speaking in ecstatic utterances and somebody's trying to give a prophecy and some are over here singing a song and you say oh this is incredible. Then they give you the little brochure, welcome to the First Church of Corinth. And if you happen to have a unbelieving guest he would go away saying these people are what? Mad. They're mad. They're out of their minds. Well, you see that is exactly what was going on in Corinth and that's why Chapter 11, verse 17 says when you come together it's not for the better, it's what? It's for the worst.

It's a mess. And so here they all are in this wild crazy frenzy carrying on. Paul's got to straighten it out. You know one of the reasons that I believe that true gift of languages is just that, languages not ecstatic babble is that God would never give a gift that would be the same as Satan uses, among other reasons. So Greek religion invade the Corinthian assembly and they wrote the letter and they said would you please tell us how we could tell what's good and what's bad and who's what and what's going on. We don't...we've lost it folks.

I'll never forget I read a book recently written by a Pentecostal writer and this was one of his statements and I quote it to you. "When someone stands up and gives a divine utterance we know one of two things, it is either of God or it is not." Well, that's narrowing it down to two, but that's leaving you with a small dilemma. Well, that's exactly where the Corinthians...we know it is either God or it is not. How can we tell? Things have gotten out of hand. We can't tell any more. Well, the full answer's going to take us through Chapter 14. And all of it will come together. So here they are in Corinth, the city filled with priests and priestesses and soothsayers and people in ecstasy and enthusiasm claiming divine power, divine inspiration, and in the church they're carnal and carnally dragging all this mess in there. And they've abused it all the way to it's limits. They expected the Holy Spirit to work. No question about that.

The Holy Spirit had promised to work. They knew Joel 2 had begun to fulfilled. "I'll pour out my spirit on all flesh and there will be visions and dreams and prophesies and all." They knew that was beginning to happen. And they knew that Jesus had said to the disciples that when the spirit comes amazing things are going to happen. People will speak with languages and according to the end of the 16thChapter of Mark there are going to be amazing things attending those who believe. They knew the spirit of God was going to work. Jesus promised in John 14, 15, and 16 to send the spirit.

In Acts 1:5 before he ascended he said you'll be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. They were expecting it and it was happening and then it all got muddled because of Satan and they didn't know how to tell what was what. Now you remember that 1 Corinthians is one of the earliest letters in the New Testament. You just remember that it didn't take long to muddy the water. Why? Because Satan doesn't let any grass grow under his feet. And if anybody is silly enough to say today and sometimes they'll say to me, well look what happened it must be of the spirit. Oh?

That is the assumption that Satan doesn't counterfeit.

I was talking with a man recently who is a leader in the modern Pentecostal movement who said to me, "well, you can't deny this experience." And I said, "well, let me ask you this when that experience occurs, wherever and whenever, do you always, without question know it is of God? Be honest." "No." "Could it be of Satan." "Yes." "How do you tell the difference?" And he had no answer. And that's exactly where the Corinthians are. And I say to these folks if you want the answer, come and study this with us, because it's here. And we'll see it as we go.

Now what was the question that they asked him. Well, probably they said something like this, Paul, you know we have so many richly gifted people in our church, but the problem is everybody wants to do everything at the same time. And then we've got all kinds of wild things happening and it's all causing confusion. Could you help us solve our problem? And so he begins to solve their problem in verse 1. Let's read it any way.

Verse 1, we've got five minutes left. "Now concerning spiritual gifts brethren, I would not have you ignorant." Now that's a good introduction. Paul says the one thing I don't want about this and that is I don't want you to be ignorant. I don't want you to be agnostics literally. People who don't know. I want you to understand this subject. Why? I told you why folks. Listen, the church can't function without the operation of spiritual gifts. That is how the Holy Spirit works. That's how the Holy Spirit operates. And that's how the body is built. It has to happen.

And it's vital and another thing Satan is counterfeiting so you can't be ignorant. You must understand. And you can't base your understanding on experience because you can't be that perceptive. The Corinthians weren't and they admitted it. That's more than I can say for some folks. And the spiritual gifts in the Corinthian church were doing exactly the opposite of what God intended. Instead of unifying the body they were splitting it. So Paul starts at ground zero and point number one, just looking at the beginning of it, we gave you three points I think on that outline. The importance of spiritual gifts, the source and the kind, just to begin with he discusses the importance of spiritual gifts starting in verse 1.

"Now concerning," and that's like saying now my second point. His first point is 11:18 and it dealt with abuses of the Lord's Supper. "Now," he says and he uses the Greek deas a transition. It's the same as saying in the second place in this case any way. In the second place, you're abusing your fellowship concerning spiritual gifts and I do not want you to be ignorant. Now notice the words spiritual gifts. You probably have gifts in italics because that particular word does not appear in the text. The only word that appears is spiritual. "Now concerning spirituals brethren, I would not have you ignorant." What are spirituals?

Pneumatikon, now mark this for me. Pneumatikon, that word is a simple word. You can understand a lot about it's meaning by understanding the word. Pneuma is what? Spirit. Any time you see an i-k-o-s or an -i-k-a or an i-k-o-n ending on a Greek word it means characterized or controlled by. Pneumatikonthen would be controlled by or characterized by the Spirit. "Now concerning certain things characterized or controlled by the Spirit brethren," now what are these things. Well, some say he's talking about spiritual persons. Now concerning spiritual persons brethren. In other words, the carnal people are in the first 11 Chapters. The spiritual people are from here on out. They're the ones who speak in tongues and have the gift. They're the spiritual people.

Does it mean spiritual people? You say well, is it in the neuter or the masculine? We don't know, it's the same form for both. So it could be spiritual persons if masculine or if neuter spiritual things. Well, how do you know? Well, the only way you can tell is to go to Chapter 14, verse 1 where the same term is used in reference to the same thing. Verse 1 of 14, "Follow after love and desire spirituals," same word and this time it is neuter. It is a distinct neuter form. So it has to be things. Desire spiritual things and rather that you may what? Prophesy. And then he goes on to talk about prophesying and speaking in languages.

So the spiritual things that he's talking about in Chapter 14 are what? Gifts. So we go back to Chapter 12 if it could be a neuter or a masculine we will assume because it is a neuter in 14:1, it is a neuter here because the subject is the same. So concerning spiritual things. What are those spiritual things? Verse 4, "diversities of," what, "gifts." And that's why we put gifts in there. Now concerning spiritual gifts. He's not referring to spiritual people here but gifts. Spiritual gifts. The word pneumatikos, appears 26 times in the New Testament. Twenty-five of those times it means characterized or controlled by the Holy Spirit. One time it is used in reference to Satan. But it's normal use is controlled by the Spirit.

Now concerning certain gifts under the control of the spirit brethren I would not have you ignorant. Now you learn a lot about spiritual gifts right there in that word don't you. Because that word tells you spiritual gifts are controlled by whom? The Spirit. If you go down to verse 5, you'll see another word. He uses five different terms to refer to these gifts. Verse 4, the word gifts that's charisma, grace. It means they receive by grace. You can't earn them. You go to verse 5, he uses the word administration. In the Greek it's diakoneowhich means serve. The word indicates that spiritual gifts are used to do what? To serve. And you go down into verse 6 and he uses the word that refers to energy, energeo, and uses that in reference to gifts which means they are energized by God. So spiritual gifts controlled by the spirit given by grace from God, used to serve the body and controlled by the Lord or empowered by the Lord.

So you see the different terms that he uses come at the same term or the same idea of gifts with a different emphasis. So here he's just calling them spirituals. That is these items that he's going to talk about are those things under the control and characterized by the spirit. All right, he says, he

calls them brethren in order to kind of soften the blow before he talks about their ignorance. "Now concerning spiritual gifts brethren, I would not have you ignorant." Now that's what we call an idiom. It's a Greek idiom for something that's super emphatic. Paul reserved it for use when he wanted to say something very important like I would not have you ignorant concerning them that sleep. 1 Thessalonians 4 he's talking about the rapture.

He uses it when he's talking about something very vital like in Romans Chapter 1. "I would not have you ignorant that often times I purpose to come unto you that I might have fruit among you even as among the Gentiles I am a debtor...". You know, he doesn't want them ignorant about the impotence that he has to preach the gospel. In Romans 11, he doesn't want them ignorant about Israel and the place God has in restoring them. We see this term used again and again when Paul has something of vital importance. So I want you to understand spiritual gifts. I don't want you to be ignorant about it. You must understand it.

You say why? Because the church can't mature without it. The church can't function without it. Satan is going to counterfeit it and it's going to confuse and cause chaos and it's going to split the church and folks that is exactly what it's done today? You must understand it. You must understand how you are to understand a gift and how you are to minister your gifts. And what is a gift and what isn't a gift. There's a lot of ignorance today. Ignorance manifests itself in the abuse of gifts, ignoring them, neglecting them, over-emphasizing the wrong ones, confusing them with counterfeits and Paul says the ignorance has got to end.

And that's precisely what we have in mind. Hopefully the spirit of God will direct us in the understanding of that so that ignorance can come to an end. Well, that's at least a start. We'll finish it up as the Spirit directs us. And I want you to be a part of our study. I know it's going to go into the summer and if you can't get it here, if you'll be on vacation or something you plan on getting it on tape so we stand together in an understanding of these truths.

Let's pray. Father, we have dealt with this in a very teaching, learning, context and we feel a tremendous sense of importance in dealing fairly and in detail. And so we ask Your spirit to teach. Help us to realize that the sphere in which all of our Christian life operates is Chapter 13 love and to be loving and kind and dealing with truth. But nonetheless firm in our understanding of that which you have said.

Help us to be faithful Bible students, to not be swayed by subjectiveism, but to deal with truth as truth. Help us to grow and mature in the knowledge of Your word and Yourself for Your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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