LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

1 Corinthians 12 :1-11

Spiritual Gifts

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Hey, everyone. Welcome back to our study in 1 Corinthians. We are going to be getting into a brand new chapter this time. We're getting into chapter 12, and we're going to be talking about spiritual gifts. But I want to remind you of something.

In our last study, as we finished up chapter 11, I told you that the Apostle Paul was embarking on a theme that would encompass these next couple of chapters. And that whole theme is something we talked about last time. It's about caring for the body of Christ. And that's going to culminate in chapter 13 with what we call the love chapter. So this is the theme, and I want you to remember that because that context helps us to understand why Paul is saying what he is saying to the Corinthians and what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through this letter.

Now he's going to talk about spiritual gifts in this chapter, but that is going to bring us later into chapter 14, where Paul is going to begin to speak about how the Corinthians were exercising those spiritual gifts, and whether or not they were doing it in an attitude that was consistent with how we as believers ought to treat one another. So keep that in mind as the context here. So we learn a lot about spiritual gifts in this first section of chapter 12, but remember the context, right? Why is Paul writing this to the Corinthians? It's very important that we keep that in mind.

Let's read the verses 1 through 11, then we'll pray, and then we'll get into it. Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God says, Jesus is accursed, and no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit. Now, there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the

common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit. To another, faith by the same Spirit.

To another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit. To another, the working of miracles. To another, prophecy. To another, the ability to distinguish between spirits. To another, various kinds of tongues.

To another, the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as He wills. Let's pray. Father, as we get into these verses, teach us, instruct us, open our hearts to what you want us to hear. We ask it in the name and authority of Jesus our Savior.

Amen. The Apostle Paul begins this section here in chapter 12 by saying, concerning spiritual gifts, I would not, I do not want you to be uninformed. Your Bible may say, I don't want you to be ignorant. And that's essentially what that word means. The first thing we need to talk about is spiritual gifts.

What are spiritual gifts? And we'll also be talking about how one appropriates spiritual gifts. That's important too. First of all, spiritual gifts are supernatural endowments, abilities that are given through the Holy Spirit, by the Holy Spirit, into the life of a believer so that he might serve the Lord in some particular way. And I want to emphasize the word supernatural.

These are not natural giftings. There are such things as natural giftings. But what Paul cites here in this chapter are supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. And that means, apart from the Spirit, we would not function or be able to function in any of these. He says to them, I don't want you to be ignorant about those.

And I find that to be a very interesting statement. There has been over the years so much bad teaching on the topic of spiritual gifts that unfortunately what Paul expresses his desire about, that we would not be ignorant, many times is in fact the case. Many Christians are ignorant of spiritual gifts, and sometimes not because of bad teaching, but because of neglect. There are churches that just pass over passages that have to do with spiritual gifts, and they do so by saying, well, those don't apply to today because spiritual gifts are not available any longer. Well, I disagree.

I think spiritual gifts are functioning today. I think they are available to believers today. And I think that a lot of what churches say about spiritual gifts being gone or no longer available is simply a reaction to the abuse and the misuse of spiritual gifts by some groups. But I really strongly believe that we shouldn't be throwing the baby out with the bathwater, because spiritual gifts are important. They were given to us by God that we might function in spiritual abilities in our service to the Lord.

When do we see spiritual gifts begin to function in the body of Christ? Well, that's easy. We see it in the book of Acts, and we see a very clear delineation in the book between when the disciples operated apart from spiritual gifts, and when they began to function in spiritual gifts. It all begins in Acts chapter 1, where Jesus says to his disciples, I don't want you to leave Jerusalem. I want you to stay here.

And he said that during that period of days between his resurrection and his ascension. I don't want you to leave Jerusalem, he told them, but I want you to wait for the gift you heard me talking about. And then he said to them, you will be baptized. The Holy Spirit will come, and he will baptize you. And then he said this, and you will receive power.

That's a Greek word, dunamis. And it's where we get our word dynamite. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. Now, please understand, in Acts chapter 2, when the Holy Spirit fell upon the church, and we read about that, it took place during the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem, well, when the city was swelling with pilgrims, and the disciples were gathered together. And you know about that passage in the book of Acts, where the Spirit fell upon the assembled believers.

This is not the first coming of the Holy Spirit. It's the second work of the Holy Spirit. And I shouldn't even really use the word coming, I should use function. Because we don't receive the Holy Spirit and then receive him again. We receive the Holy Spirit to be, to live within us when we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

And that's an important distinction. And that is outlined for us in the book of John. I'm going to have you open your Bible and turn there, if you would, please, to John chapter 20. All right, John chapter 20. And if you will look and skip down with me to verse 19.

This is what you're about to read all took place on the very same day that Jesus rose from the grave. All right. And it says, on the evening of that day, and that day is the day that's been talking about here in the earlier part of this chapter, which is the resurrection day. So on the evening of that day, the first day of the week, so that would have been Sunday, the doors being locked, where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, peace be with you. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you, as the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." Now, verse 22 is important. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. This is the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell. The picture is undeniable.

Breathing upon them and saying, receive the Holy Spirit. When the first man was created in the Genesis creation account, how did God make him a living being? Well, he breathed, we're told, into his nostrils the breath of life. Well, the problem was sin entered the picture by the time we got to chapter 3. And so because of sin, Jesus said, you can't just be born.

You must be born again. And so in this beautiful picture of this new birth, Jesus breathed on the disciples saying, receive the Holy Spirit. So when we get to Acts chapter 2, this is many days after that in this time between the resurrection and the ascension. And Jesus is telling them about a different work of the Holy Spirit that is going to come into their lives. This work is the Spirit coming upon, not in.

It's a different preposition used in the Greek. When the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit indwelling, the word in is used. Actually, it's the Greek word en, E-N, transliterated. When he speaks of this other work of the Holy Spirit to empower, the English word is on or upon. And it's the Greek word epi, all right?

Different word in the Greek to speak of a different function of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't mean that someone who has not been baptized in the Spirit has less of the Holy Spirit. It just means they have not yet opened themselves to yet another function of the Holy Spirit in their life. What is that function? Well, in Acts chapter 2, or excuse me, in Acts chapter 1, Jesus tells us what the function of the Spirit coming upon is all about.

He says, and you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, OK? Here's the difference between these two works of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts, we see the Holy Spirit coming in one time when someone puts their faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, embraces his sacrifice, and calls him Savior. The Spirit comes in once. However, we see the Spirit coming upon many times and repeatedly upon the same people.

Now, here's what can be confusing. And I'll just explain this quickly. When the book of Acts refers to the Holy Spirit coming upon to empower, it uses this phrase, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. You've got to get used to that. Filled with the Holy Spirit does not mean indwelt.

It means empowered. And we see that over and over again, all right? So now that we've got a little bit of a background on when spiritual gifts were initially bestowed, we understand more about what we're seeing here in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. What do we see in Acts chapter 2? As soon as the Holy Spirit came upon them when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, what took place?

They all began speaking in languages they'd never learned, supernatural endowments, supernatural abilities. And this is the first time we have ever seen this in the New Testament. So this is important to see.

As we talk about the spiritual gifts that Paul delineates here in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, we see that they are spiritual, supernatural giftings. So let's keep reading.

Paul says, you know, verse 2, that when you were pagans, you were led astray to mute idols and so forth. So he says in verse 3, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God or by the Spirit of God, if you will, ever says Jesus is accursed. And no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit. Let's stop here and talk about this, because I think this has been misunderstood. This doesn't mean that just because someone makes the statement, Jesus is Lord, that they have to be speaking by the Spirit.

What Paul is doing is he's giving a very general, overarching guideline for them to understand that when someone is speaking by the Spirit, when they claim to have a message from the Holy Spirit that they want to give, it is never going to be negative about Jesus. That message, if it is truly through the Spirit, is always going to glorify Jesus Christ. Do you remember in, I believe it's John chapter 15, Jesus is speaking about the coming of the Holy Spirit. And he says that when the Spirit comes, he will take from what is mine and reveal it to you, and he will bring glory to me. He will speak of me, and he will bring glory.

The Holy Spirit wants to speak about Jesus, and the Holy Spirit will always glorify Jesus. He will never say anything negative or contrary about the person of Jesus Christ. That's what Paul is saying in this particular section. No one is ever going to make some statement about Jesus being accursed. That would never be a message given by the Spirit.

Because why? Because the Holy Spirit comes to glorify Jesus. He comes to speak of his glories, his majesty, his wonders, his goodness. Those are the kinds of things that the Holy Spirit is always going to do. So he's giving a basic guideline.

If you hear somebody saying things that are negative, and they say, hey, this is a message from the Spirit, and I need to tell you about this Jesus person, and they start talking about all kinds of negative, disrespectful things, well, you know. That's not a message through the Spirit. That's the simple guideline that he's giving them there. Now, in verse 4, he says there are varieties of gifts, all kinds of different gifts, right? But it's the same Spirit that gives them all.

You've got to remember, he's talking to people who were formerly pagans. He mentions that earlier. Pagans had a deity for everything. And so they believed in this multiplicity of gods. But now Paul is teaching them that all these things, all these spiritual giftings, come through the one, the same Holy Spirit.

He says there are all kinds of varieties of service, but it's the same Lord. There are varieties of activities, even. But it's the same God who empowers them all in everyone. Notice he says, Spirit, Lord, God. That's the Trinity, by the way, in those verses.

And then he says a very important statement in verse 7. And by the way, I want you to consider underlining this statement, because I believe this is the key verse of this entire section. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Okay, remember, that's the overarching theme of what we talked about last time in the latter part of verse 11, what he's talking about here in 12, what he's gonna talk about in 13, and what he's gonna continue talking about in chapter 14. The common good.

Doing things for the common good. In other words, the spiritual gift that God gives you is not for you. It's for others. It's for you to give away. The Spirit gives manifestations, spiritual gifts, to individuals that they might bless the body for the common good.

Such a key verse to understanding these chapters. Then he begins to talk about the individual giftings, some of which he will add to later on. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, right? Now remember, this doesn't say the Spirit is giving wisdom. It says he's giving the utterance of wisdom.

When we speak of an utterance, we're talking about speech, words. Okay. He's gonna talk next about the utterance of knowledge. So let's define the difference between knowledge and wisdom, shall we? Knowledge is simply knowing something.

Okay. It's knowing perhaps that something is going to happen. I know that this is going to happen. I know what's going on in your life. The Spirit can give an utterance of knowledge to someone to or about another person.

And that person, you know, who has been given that utterance of knowledge may say, I have just learned through the Spirit that you were raised as an orphan, for example, or that you have a heart of bitterness towards your mother, or that you think you've committed this horrible sin for which God can never forgive you. That would be an utterance of knowledge. I know this, but I couldn't have known it apart from the Lord dropping it in my heart. What is the difference between that and wisdom? Wisdom is a directive.

It is to know what to do about that knowledge. Okay. It would be something the Lord would tell you to do through someone else. That would be an utterance of wisdom. Here's what you need to do about it, right?

I can see that God has shown me that you have a heart full of bitterness about your mother. Okay, that's knowledge, an utterance of knowledge. But then I might go on to say to that person, the Lord wants you to repent and to go to your mother and tell her that you forgive her. That would be an utterance of wisdom. Here's what you do with that knowledge.

All right. So these are the first two supernatural utterances that are given or listed by the Apostle Paul. So we'll read this again. Verse 8 to 1, 4 to 1 is given through the Spirit, the utterance of wisdom, and to another, the utterance of knowledge, according to the same Spirit. Verse 9, to another, faith by the same Spirit.

This is not saving faith. We're talking to people who are already saved. You have to, you know, a person who's saved is going to be baptized at the Holy Spirit and given gifts of the Spirit. This is a supernatural faith. It's a supernatural knowing that God is going to do something specific and something dynamic and supernatural.

And it's like, I know that I know, that I know, that I know that this is going to happen. And they have the supernatural faith to just, boom, it's there, right? He says, to another, gifts of healing. Notice the plural, gifts, not gift of healing, but gifts of healing, which suggests that there may be gifts that are given for specific maladies or the healing of specific maladies. These two are given by the one Spirit.

Verse 10, to another, the working of miracles. This is more general, just supernatural functions, abilities. To another, prophecy. And prophecy is a general message that is usually given not to an individual, typically, but to the church, in the church. This is usually when prophecy is uttered.

If it is something given to an individual, it may come under the category of a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom. But a prophecy is usually given to the church. To another, the ability to distinguish between spirits. This is mentioned in other translations as the discerning of spirits. And this gets into a spiritual ability to know what you're dealing with, whether or not there is a demonic activity going on, or whether this is a true work of God.

This is this distinguishing, discerning ability. People write to me from time to time, and they ask about the gift of discernment. The Bible doesn't talk about the gift of discernment. It talks about the discerning of spirits or distinguishing between spirits. Okay, there is obviously such a thing as discernment, but it is not listed as a spiritual gift, just basic discernment.

Okay, to another, various kinds of tongues. Stop there. The word tongues in the Bible is very simply the word languages. Okay, so don't get weirded out about it. But the word tongues is used to describe not a person's natural language, but a supernatural ability to speak in a language they've never learned.

They don't even know what they're saying. And that is why the next gifting is very important. He says, to another, the interpretation of tongues. And interpretations are always used when tongues are spoken in the church service. Now, most church services don't even, you won't even hear that, unless you're in a Charismatic or Pentecostal church.

And we're going to talk as we get into chapter 14 more about the difference between private usages of some of these gifts, like tongues, and the public usage of some of these gifts. Paul, when he speaks of the interpretation of tongues, he's speaking of the public gifting or ability of someone to know what was said, even though, supernaturally, to know what was said, even though they don't or didn't understand the words that were spoken. So it's a supernatural thing both ways. The person who spoke it didn't understand what they were saying. The person who interprets it didn't understand the words, but they were given the interpretation by the Spirit, and then they spoke it, and then everyone understood.

And that's why interpretation was so important. Paul reminds us in verse 11, all these are empowered by one and the same Spirit. And this, the word empowered, leads us back to Acts chapter 1, where Jesus said, when the Spirit comes, you will be baptized, and you will receive power. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. It is God who gives these giftings.

You can desire some giftings. You can pray about some giftings. But ultimately, it is God who apportions them. So that's something that we have to keep in mind, okay? Now, I know that this has probably raised a lot of questions.

People who have not experienced some of these supernatural giftings, and it seems like for some reason or another, the gift of tongues is one that people have the most questions about. I'm not really sure why that is, but it is. It is very difficult. When one has not experienced gifts like this, to understand, it's very difficult to kind of wrap your head around some of these giftings. And people have a lot of questions.

Let me encourage you. We will get to the answers. And I believe that we'll be able to answer most of your questions, if not all, by the time we get through chapter 14. The reason I say that is that I've been a pastor for a long time, and people have been asking me questions about supernatural gifts, particularly the

gift of tongues and so forth, for a long time. And I think I've learned to anticipate most of the questions that people have.

And I think I will be able to answer most of your questions. I hope that that is the case, because not only have I learned a lot from answering questions over the years, but I am a recipient of some of these gifts, including the gift of tongues. I have received the gift of tongues. God saw fit to give it to me back in the 1980s, and I have had it ever since. And I've used it.

Never once have I used it in public. Never once that I can recall. I have used it many times and continue to use it in private. And we will talk about, again, the public and private usage of some of these gifts, including tongues, when we get to chapter 14. So trust me, stay tuned.

We'll get to these questions and hopefully give some good answers. That's what we're going to do for today. This is where we're going to stop. And so we're going to pray. You'll have some discussion questions, and we'll move on in this chapter next time.

So pray with me. Father, thank you so much. Thank you for giving us great wisdom, great insight. And thank you, Lord God, for your Holy Spirit, who empowers us to do things that we would otherwise be unable to do. Thank you for the supernatural giftings.

We want to be open. We want to be open to all of them. We want to be used by you and we want to serve you with these things. So open our hearts, open our spiritual eyes, open our spiritual ears and teach us. We look to you through Jesus, our Savior.

Amen.