

The Patio Pulpit For September 30, 2020 A New Series, “The Gifts of the Spirit”

Tonight, I’m beginning a new series on the gifts of the Spirit as Paul lays them out in First Corinthians chapter 12. This study will be different. For one thing, I’m going to dig into **why** Paul listed them for the Corinthians when he didn’t for any of the other churches or pastors he wrote to. We pastors and teachers who teach on this list in First Corinthians tend to overlook **why** Paul spelled out the gifts the way he did. And that is an essential matter of Biblical interpretation called **context**.

But there’s another “why” question I would like to deal with now before I go any further with this lesson, and that is “why should any disciple of Christ care about spiritual gifts? Why should you bother to go through another series on the gifts of the Holy Spirit?” I’ll give you four reasons why you should care and why you should listen to this series.

First, not to know about the gifts and their purpose is to willfully ignore that aspect of the word of God. Spiritual gifts exist. They are a fact of life. They are embedded in the church.

When I worked for our Park and Rec department, we took classes at CPCC on grounds maintenance and one of the classes involved pruning different types of plants. We were told that certain plants have latent buds and we could prune those plants almost down to nothing and the latent buds would produce branches. Many Christians are like those plants, they have latent gifts. The gifts are there they just haven’t come out yet.

Second, it is God’s will that we be gifted and thus we are.

Third, the gifts are God’s gift to the church, not man’s. We don’t decide whether or not we’re going to have a gift, God does.

Fourth, the gifts are essential for the health of the church. The body of Christ and those who make up that body need the gifts of the Spirit in order to grow into a healthy and vibrant body. Just this morning while I was working on this lesson I remembered that our physical bodies are dying a little more each day but our spiritual inner man isn’t aging at all.

¹⁶ *Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. (2 Cor. 4:16 NAU)*

The growth of our inner man into a healthy and mature person is dependent on the gifts of the Spirit.

¹¹ *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,*

¹² *for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; (Eph. 4:11-15 NAU)*

And that, boys and girls, is why we need to know the workings of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Now our text: **1 Corinthians 12:1** *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.*

² *You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led.*

³ *Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*

⁴ *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

⁵ *And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.*

⁶ *There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.*

⁷ *But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

⁸ *For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;*

⁹ *to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,*

¹⁰ *and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.*

¹¹ *But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. (1 Cor. 12:1-11 NAU)*

1 Corinthians 12:1 *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware or “ignorant.”* That should be the desire of every pastor and every teacher of God’s word. Personally, I want to do my best to keep my folks here at Eastway informed not only of what’s in the Bible, but what’s going on in the world around us and in the visible church. I really want you to be aware. I live with an abiding concern for your spiritual welfare because of the deceptions that are everywhere these days. But I’m not putting you in my hands because I know that you’re in bigger hands. But I take my calling as your shepherd very seriously.

But keeping with the context of that verse and **why** Paul addressed the gifts, Paul was answering a question that the Corinthians had asked him in a letter they had sent to him. They wanted Paul to give them some guidance on the topic of spiritual gifts. As a matter of fact, almost this entire letter is Paul’s answers to similar questions. But for tonight, I’ll deal with his instructions and correction concerning the gifts. That’s why the apostle begins this section “Now, about this matter of spiritual gifts,” he was answering their questions in some kind of order and he now came to this question.

So, what was going on in Corinth that drove the people there to write Paul seeking his advice? And **why didn’t they ask their pastor or one of the church elders?** Probably because the elders were clueless about how to handle the spiritual mayhem that had broken out in their congregation. The leaders of the church in Corinth were probably as new to the faith and the gifts of the Spirit as their congregants were.

Every member it seems wanted to speak in tongues, at the same time, and it was as bad as the tower of Babel in Corinth. It was the Charismatic Movement and Pentecostalism all rolled into one. And it was ignorance that was causing all the mayhem. Paul was saying “I can put an end to this. I can make you aware of what you should be doing.”

“I do not want you to be ignorant brethren. I want you to be informed brethren.” There will always be a degree of ignorance in any

congregation, but hopefully not of the essential truths of the faith such as the ministry and Person of the Holy Spirit.

But ignorant of what? Unaware of what? I see at least four concerns: Number one, the source and distribution of the gifts, number two, your past life before you were born of the Spirit and the effects it may be having on the Christian in the present. We need to keep in mind how the Corinthians had lived before hearing and believing the gospel. They were unrighteous, idol worshiping pagans, fornicating, adulterous, sodomites, homosexual, drunkards, thieving, swindlers, foolish, weak, base and despised people. (1 Cor. 1:26-28; 6:9-10 NAU)

We here at Eastway should keep this in mind as well. Not everyone in our midst and not everyone who might visit this church grew up in the church, like yours truly, but lived lives that you would find not so pleasant. And oddly enough, we were all saved the same way. Go figure. Those who grew up going to church were saved by grace. And we former pagans were saved by the same grace.

Number three, in my outline of what the church has been ignorant of, the purpose of the gifts, number four, the abuse of the gifts.

So let's take those concerns one at a time.

Number one, the source and distribution of the gifts.

And that's as plain as the nose on Jimmy Durante's face. First Corinthians 12, verses 4-6:

⁴ *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

⁵ *And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.*

⁶ *There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. (1 Cor. 12:4-6 NAU)*

The source of spiritual gifts, the gifts of the Spirit, is the Trinity, but ultimately God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit decided to assign the Spirit to give and distribute the gifts as He wills. All three members of the Godhead are involved in giving the gifts of the Spirit. They are called the gifts of the Spirit because He is the one who actually puts the gifts within the believer when He takes up residence within us. Jesus poured the Spirit out, or gave the Spirit for that purpose.

Now concerning the distribution of the gifts. And I will close with this concern tonight.

¹¹ *But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.* The Holy Spirit has been given all authority by the Lord Jesus to distribute the gifts as He wills to whom He wills. Our charismatic and Pentecostal neighbors erroneously teach that every disciple of Christ is supposed to speak in tongues, not so. The word of God says otherwise.

When we talk about the Trinity we always say that the “Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity.” But I hope when we relegate Him to what seems like third place we know better. He is co-equal with the Father and the Son. He carries the same power and authority as They do. And His part in our justification, our salvation, our redemption, our reconciliation and our sanctification is as necessary as the other two members of the Trinity. **Remember this,**

the Spirit is the Person who draws us to Jesus.

The Spirit is the One who gives us life and light and faith.

The Spirit is the Person who gives us access to the Father.

The Spirit is the Person who bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

The Spirit is the Person who prays on our behalf when we don’t know how to pray.

The Spirit is the One who teaches us and shows us things to come.

The Spirit is the Person of the Trinity who gives us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of what Christ has done and is doing right now for us.

The Spirit is the Person who comforts us when we go through trying times.

The Spirit is the One who seals us after we have heard and believed the gospel.

Someday we will talk about the Trinity, but for this night I hope you have all been reminded of the essential role of the Spirit and His gifts to the body of Christ, the church.