

This is tape number SHS313. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical references are quoted from King James Version.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 12 where Paul speaks concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Tonight will be, more or less, an introduction to the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Paul begins the twelfth chapter by saying,

Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

You will notice, if you have a King James Bible, that the word *gifts* is in italics. As we have mentioned in the past, whenever you see a word written in italics, it means that word is not in the original Greek, but has been inserted by the translators to help give a flow of understanding. Now in the fourth verse, Paul does mention the diversities of gifts, but it was inserted here in chapter one to help sort of complete the thought—“Now concerning spirituals”—you see without the additional word it does not really give us the full sense.

It is difficult to translate from one language into another. There are some languages that have different tenses. They might have a word which is very descriptive that takes two or three words to describe in English. We often do not have an exact English equivalent for such a word. And thus, you try to more or less interpret many times when you translate; and it is always difficult to translate from one language to another, giving the full meaning that is indicated in the original language.

The word “things” could have been added by the translators, “Now concerning the things of the Spirit” (because Paul is going to be talking about the things of the Spirit), or “now concerning spiritual things.” But the word *gift* is proper also. As I said, it appears in verse 4 and it is obvious that this is the subject that Paul is introducing to us in chapter 12—the subject of the gifts of the Spirit. And here in the twelfth chapter, he gives to us quite a listing of the gifts and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Paul said,

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

Paul’s desire for the church is that they might be knowledgeable, and that they not be ignorant of certain important spiritual truths. In Romans 11:25, he did not want them to be ignorant of the blindness that has happened to Israel, in part until the fullness of the Gentiles was come. He did not want them, in 1 Corinthians 10:1, to be ignorant of the fact that the history of the nation of Israel and their deliverance out of Egypt was typical history. That it was and it is a type of the church, and of our deliverance from the power of sin, and of our coming into the full rich life of the Spirit.

Here in 1 Corinthians 12:1, Paul says, “I would not have you to be ignorant of the spirituals.” And then in Thessalonians he did not want them to be ignorant concerning those who are asleep in Christ, or those who have died—as far as their place in the future and in the resurrection. And thus, Paul has introduced many subjects with the declaration, “I do not want you to be ignorant.”

Interestingly enough, in practically every place where Paul said, “I do not want you to be ignorant,” it follows that there is a rather gross ignorance in the church on those subjects. And no doubt it is because of this ignorance and, many times, the difficulty of understanding these subjects, that there remains a lot of misunderstanding. I do not know of any subject of which there is more ignorance in the church today, than the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I believe that there is ignorance on both sides of the issue. I believe that a lot of people are just ignorant of the fact that there are gifts of the Holy Spirit available for Christians today. And concerning their proper, scriptural use, I believe that there is a great ignorance among those who are exercising the gifts.

Now Paul is really writing to the Corinthians who had not come behind in any of the gifts. There were many of the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, I suppose, all of the gifts of the Spirit were being demonstrated and manifested there in Corinth. And yet, with the manifestation there were a lot of abuses in the use of the gifts of the Spirit. And basically Paul is writing to correct many of these abuses. And for that we can be very thankful. Because of Paul’s writing to the Corinthians to correct the abuses of the use of the gifts of the Spirit, Scripture gives us a guideline for the proper use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

So there is a lot of ignorance today on the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And hopefully as we get into the series on this subject, we will be able to clarify a lot of the ignorance that does exist on this subject.

“I do not want you to be ignorant of these things, but these things you know.” Paul begins to affirm, first of all, basic foundational truths that they know. “You were once Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols” (1 Corinthians 12:2). As Gentiles they were outside of the covenant of God. The word *Gentile* in the New Testament is a synonym for heathen or pagan. You were once pagans. You were once heathens.

In the letter to the Ephesians 2:11-12, Paul said,

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles [or heathens] in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands.

And thus, he is describing now what he means by a Gentile.

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

So that is a definition of the term *Gentile*. And when the term *Gentile* is used in Scripture, that is what it is referring to—one who is without Christ. A Gentile is one who is alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenants of God. They are without hope and they are without God in this world.

So Paul says, “Remember-that you were once Gentiles.” In Ephesians 4:17-18, he said,

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk. [Do not walk as these heathen walk], in the emptiness of their minds, having the understanding

darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart.

So a further definition of the word *Gentile*, as it is used in the Scripture, is one who is walking in the emptiness of his mind. His understanding of spiritual things is darkened. He is alienated from the life of God through his ignorance, and he has a blindness in his heart concerning the things of God and the things of the Holy Spirit. And the result: “As you were Gentiles, you were carried unto the dumb idols.” Now the word *dumb* there is in the sense of idols that cannot speak. It is not like, oh you dumbbell. But it is idols that cannot speak. They worshipped idols in Corinth. These were idols that could neither speak, nor hear, nor feel, think, walk or see. David described the idols of the heathen when he said,

Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?
(Psalm 115:2)

And a lot of times people will say that to you when things have gone wrong—when things have sort of caved in on you—they say, “Well, where is your God now?” They say, “Where is your God?” David responded, “Our God is in the heavens and He has done what He has pleased.” In other words, God is in control. God is ruling. And though it may look like a tragedy and it may look very severe and hard, yet God is in control. Our God is in the heavens. He rules. He has done as He has pleased. But your gods—their gods, the gods of the heathen,” he declared, “are made of wood or stone.” And David said,

They have eyes; but they cannot see. Ears, but they cannot hear.
Noses, but they cannot smell. They have hands but they cannot
handle. They have feet, but they cannot walk and neither can
they speak through their throats. They have mouths, but they
speak not. Eyes they have, but they see not. (Psalm 135:15-17
paraphrased)

And so Paul describes the gods of the heathen as not being able to see or speak or hear. And here he calls them dumb or mute idols—idols that cannot talk.

There is an interesting thing about the psalmist’s declaration of the idols of the heathen as he describes them. We see that when a man makes a god, when a man carves out an idol, when he takes a stick and begins to carve a shape or an image, he makes it like himself. He carves a nose on it. He carves eyes on it. He carves ears on it. He carves a mouth on it. He is making it like himself. Yet, as he has made his god like himself, he has made his god—or the god that he has made, is really less than himself. Although he has carved eyes on his god, the eyes cannot see. Though he has carved ears on it, the ears cannot hear. Though he has carved a mouth on it, it cannot speak. So, he has made his god less than himself. So a man, when he makes a god, he makes it like himself. However, he makes it less than himself. And the psalmist, in the same place, made the observation,

They that make them are like unto them. (Psalm 135:18)

Thus, a man becomes like his god. Now if you have made your own god, but you have made him less than yourself and you are now becoming like your god, you see—that is, a deterioration. You are going down. And so those who worship false gods are actually going down. It is degrading. You are being degraded as you worship the gods that you have made (because they are less than

yourself), so that in the worship of idols—dumb idols—a person becomes like the god that he has made. Your god cannot see; and so you become blind to the truths of God and to the things of God. Your god cannot hear; and so you become deaf to the things of the Spirit and to the voice of God. Your god cannot feel; and so you become unfeeling, cold, and hard. A person becomes like his god.

So many times people do things and the horrible atrocities that they have done are reported in the news. And we wonder, *How could a person do such things?* Surely they can have no feeling and do those kinds of things. They have to be without feeling, without normal feelings. And that is very true. They have been worshipping gods that cannot feel. They have become like their gods. They no longer can feel. They have no feelings. They can do the most horrible things and be cold and sneering about it. And we see that manifested so much today. A person who has been arrested for some of these horrible crimes can sit there in court just with a sneer, defiant, showing no repentance whatsoever. No sign of remorse. And so many times you read: “And they showed no signs of remorse.” It is because they have been worshipping gods that have no feelings and they have become unfeeling themselves.

Isaiah 44 shows how foolish it is for a man to take a piece of wood and to carve an idol out of that piece of wood and to worship it. Isaiah said,

The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with a compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. (Isaiah 44:13)

So he takes the piece of wood and he takes out his ruler. He takes out his compass. He makes his line. He carves the thing out to look like a man, so that it might be set on a pedestal in the house.

He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn. (Isaiah 44:14-15)

That is, you take and you cut down the wood and you burn part of it. You put it in your fireplace.

For he will take thereof, and warm himself. (Isaiah 44:15)

You have built the fire out of a part of that limb that you cut off the tree to warm yourself.

Yea he kindleth it, and he bakes bread. (Isaiah 44:15)

So you put it in the oven in order that you might bake your bread.

Yea, and he maketh a god and worshippeth it.

Out the same stick then, part of the branch he puts in his fireplace to get warm. Part of it he puts in the oven to bake his bread. And then a part of it, he takes and he begins to carve it out to make a god. And then he worships it. He makes a graven image and he bows down to it. And so then he points out the folly. He burns part with the fire and with it he eats. That is, he has roasted the meat and is satisfied. Yea, he warms himself and he says, “Ah-ha, I am warm. I have seen the fire.”

And the rest of it he uses to make a god, even his graven image. And then he falls down to it and worships it and prays unto it. And he says,

Deliver me; for you art my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. (Isaiah 44:17-18)

I mean, it does not make sense. It is totally irrational that with part of the limb out of the tree you build your fire, you roast your meat, you bake your bread. And the rest of it you carve into a god. You bow down to it. You worship it. You pray to it. And you say, "This is my god."

And none considereth in his heart, neither [is there] knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten [it]: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? (Isaiah 44: 19-20)

Habakkuk said,

What profit hath the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it and the molten image and the teacher of lies that the maker of his work trusts therein to make dumb idols or mute idols. Woe unto him that saith to the wood, "Awake!" and to the dumb stone, "Arise" and it shall teach. Behold it is laid over with gold and silver and there is no breath in the midst of it. (Habakkuk 2:18-19)

This demonstrates the folly of man making idols out of metal—molten metal of iron, or gold, or silver—or carving them out of wood, or carving them out of stone. So Paul is saying, "This was what you were, you Corinthians. You were alienated from God. You were separated from the life of God and you were bound up in the worship of idols—things that are insensate." They are things that cannot feel or see or talk.

Now Paul says, "This is what I want you to understand. This is what you know. This is what you were, but this is what I want you to understand."

Wherefore I give you to understand that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed. (1 Corinthians 12:3)

Every once in a while I hear what must be one of the oldest rumors in the world. I hear someone tell the story of a friend of a friend, who happened to be in a church service and someone spoke in tongues. And there was someone in the congregation or in the audience that understood the language that was being spoken, and that the person was saying horrible, blasphemous things about Jesus Christ. Now you have probably all heard that rumor in one form or another, because it is repeated over and over again. Trying to trace down the rumor is as difficult as finding the person who took the picture in the clouds and saw the form of Jesus when it was developed. It is just as difficult to find the person who picked up the hitchhiker, who spoke to them of the coming

of the Lord and then disappeared. It always happened to a friend of my cousin's, or to an aunt's friend. You know it is always once or twice removed.

And those stories go around and around and around. And this story of someone speaking in tongues, in an unknown tongue, but yet speaking blasphemies against Jesus is a rumor that is so old that it dates back to the time of Corinth and Paul's writing to the Corinthians. No doubt there was a rumor happening then that caused them to say, "Well someone understood their language and they were blaspheming Jesus."

Paul said, "I want you to understand, it does not happen. No man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed." I believe that it is very irresponsible, especially for pastors and Bible teachers, to pass on rumors or stories of which they do not have actual firsthand knowledge of the facts of the event. It is wrong especially with stories that would put God in such an unfavorable light just to prove the position that they have taken against the validity of the gifts of the Spirit and their use in the church today. Before I would pass on any such story, I would want to be able to give the name of the person, where it happened, when it happened, and even have a couple of witnesses. Because, although the stories are told with great intensity and credibility, I have never been able to search down and actually find a first-person account of such a thing. It is only a rumor. It has been going around for a couple thousand years.

"The fact is, and I want you to understand," Paul said, "is that no man by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed. And contrariwise, no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Spirit." That is—Lord, in a genuine sense. No one can really confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

Paul, writing to the Galatians in 4:6 said,

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his
Son into your hearts, crying, *Abba*, Father.

The Spirit of God in my heart gives me that awareness of my relationship. And it is just very natural to say, "Oh, Father." *Abba* is the Aramaic word for father. So saying *Abba*, or Father, is just something that is natural when the Spirit of God is dwelling in you.

To the Romans Paul said,

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but
ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba*,
Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we
are the children of God. (Romans 8:15-16)

This is just that glorious work of God's Holy Spirit. So, this I want you to understand: No man by the Spirit can call Jesus accursed. And no man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

Then I want you to know, or I want you to understand that there are diversities of gifts, but the same Lord. Now here in the twelfth chapter of Corinthians, Paul is going to speak of some of the different gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the first listing that he will give us, he will give us nine of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Towards the end of the chapter he will add some more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And there are differences in these gifts. And not all possess the same gifts. There are diversities of these gifts; and yet, though the gifts are diverse from each other, yet it is the same

Spirit. Since it is the same Spirit, the gifts should not be competing with each other or be contrary to each other.

Oh, that we could see the oneness of the body of Christ and not seek to be in competition with or in an adversarial position to others in the body of Christ, just because we do not agree with their particular doctrinal slant. One of the great tragedies in the church is the failure to properly identify who the real enemy is. And so many times the church is dividing against itself. Even within a given congregation there come these divisions. And battle lines are drawn and divisions are created, and that is tragic. How Satan loves to bring discord and division among the brethren. But then it goes beyond that, and churches then find themselves in an adversarial position with another church. And they begin to speak against another church because they are different.

Well, there are diversities of gifts, but it is the same Spirit; and thus, they should not be pitted against one another. We should be united in our effort to bring people into the kingdom of God and out of the kingdom of darkness. The real enemy is Satan and it is our task to bring them out of his kingdom into the glorious kingdom of God. It really does not matter if they affiliate with us or join with us or become a part of our group. It should never be our purpose to try to get people to come to our church. Our purpose is to bring them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and to a surrendering of their life to Him.

Our church cannot really minister to everyone's needs. Some people may say, "Well that old bald-headed man, what does he know? I want someone who is really hip, you know, and can talk about, you know, my marriage and help me. And someone who is more humorous and clever." And thus, we may not be able to minister to them. And that does not matter to me. The main issue is that we bring them out of their darkness in sin and bring them to the glorious light of Jesus Christ and then let them go wherever they can be ministered to and be helped.

So there are differences of gifts or diversities of gifts, but it is the same Spirit. And because it is the same Spirit, He would not be interrupting Himself—because it is the same Spirit. So there would not be confusion when I am teaching the Word of God and exercising my gift of teaching; the Spirit would not interrupt Himself with someone standing up and giving an utterance in tongues. He would interrupt Himself and that does not make sense. The gifts are exercised by the same Spirit.

There are differences of administrations. Now Paul speaks of some of the various administrations within the church. There are those who have the gift of apostleship, some have the gift of prophets, some have the gift of pastor-teachers, and some have the gift of governments or the gift of helps. These are differences of administrations or offices within the church. But it is the same Lord. Thus again, these various gifts complement each other rather than compete with each other.

There are those who have the gift of exhortation, and that is an important and valuable gift. You ladies who attend Friday morning fellowships recognize that my wife has the gift of exhortation. I mean when she gets up and exhorts you gals, you are ready to go out and challenge the world. I mean, she gets you all fired up. She has the gift of exhortation. And that is good. It is important. And thus, there are the differences of administrations within the church— gifts of administration. But it is the same Lord—one Lord.

And we are all serving the same Lord. Though we may serve Him in different ways, we are still serving the same Lord. It used to be that I would speak out against the ritualism within certain churches and how they had their formal rites and rituals. And I would also speak out against the overly demonstrative Pentecostals. In fact, I could find something wrong with just about everyone

but me. I found fault with that liturgical kind of a service, with the incense and the robes and the whole thing. And then I found fault with these wild things where people were screaming and running up and down the aisles.

Through the years I have noticed one nice thing about aging—it does mellow a person. And through the years I have mellowed significantly. I can now respect and accept those who want to worship God in a liturgical setting. And I can understand that there are people with certain temperaments who can worship God best in a liturgical setting. And I also realize that there are some people who can worship God best in a highly emotional setting. They want to be stirred up. They want to get up and shout and scream. They want to have a lot of excitement and exuberance in their worship of God. I can accept that there are people who worship God best in that kind of an environment.

I realize that we are all serving the same Lord, though we may be doing it differently. Yet He is the same Lord and He loves us all. He loves those who love the formal ritualism and the smell of incense. He loves them and has provided an environment for them where they are comfortable and can sense and feel His presence within that kind of a formal environment. He loves those wild, extreme people who have to do a lot of shouting and running around and get rid of a lot of energy. He loves them too and has provided an environment for them. And thank God, He loves us! And He has provided an environment for us.

I am not saying that one way is wrong, another way is right. I am saying there are differences, but it is the same Lord. That is what we seem to forget. Because of the differences we seem to think we are serving a different Lord—or that we are almost against each other—rather than just recognizing that there are differences. And God has accommodated our differences by granting us different forms of worship. Now rather than judge them because of the way they worship, it is better that we just accept the fact that they are different from us.

Paul said,

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:4)

So you see when you are judging someone because they are so wild in their worship of God, you are judging another man's servant. They do not serve you, they are serving the Lord. And God is able to hold them up. Though they may be wanting to throw themselves down—God can hold them up. “He is able to make them to stand,” Paul said.

So the true function of the gifts of the Spirit will never be conflicting, but they will be complementing each other because it is the same Lord. Then there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that works all in all. Now the gifts of the Spirit can operate differently in our lives. There are differences of operations and that is why it is often confusing to listen to a person describe how a particular gift operates in his life. You might think, *Well that is the way it operates in his life and that is the way the gift always operates*. No, you may have the same gift, but it may operate differently in your life than it does in another's life.

There are differences of operations even of the same gift. You may have the gift of prophecy and someone else may also have a gift of prophecy. But before you exercise your gift of prophecy, it may be that you hyperventilate and you feel a tingling sensation and then you get up and exercise

your gift of prophecy. And it may be that the other person does not feel any tinglings and does not hyperventilate but just, in a very calm way, exercises the gift. There are differences of operations.

You see, our Lord is a very diverse Lord and He deals with each of us as individuals, never as with a mob. God loves you individually. God deals with you individually, according to your own particular temperament and characteristics. And to me, it is glorious that God can and does deal with each of us personally and individually.

And thus, in the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, there are differences by which the Holy Spirit, or the gifts of the Spirit are operated in different lives. And yet, it is the same God. It is important that you do not try to duplicate another person's ministry. That you do not try to have the same method of operation as you see others have, thinking, *Well that is the only way the gift can operate*. There are the diversities of the operations of the gifts. Many times when we hear a person give a testimony of how the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit were manifested through their lives, we think, *Oh, that is the way it happens then*. And we then try to pattern our ministry after that. It is wrong. And we get the idea that if others do not do it like I do it, then it becomes suspect whether or not their gift is genuine. Well, there are differences. Let us accept the differences. And let us not try to confine God to a pattern. Let us not put God in a box. Let God be God. And let Him be sovereign.

Now some people see the Trinity here because of the fact that there are the differences, or diversities in the gifts, but it is the same Spirit—the Holy Spirit. There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord, who is Jesus Christ; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God—that is, God the Father.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit
withal. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

That is, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not given as sort of toys for you to just sit and enjoy this wonderful gift that God has given to you. And you just enjoy that it brings you satisfaction and pleasure as you are sitting there in the solitude of your own home. The gifts are given to the profit of the whole church, in order that the whole church might profit through the proper exercise of them. They are given for the profit of all. They are given to every man for the profit of all.

So, God has given to each of us a gift. But it is to be used to profit the whole church. There is only one gift that is mentioned that is for the individual's profit or edification. All of the gifts are intended to edify the church with the exception of the gift of tongues. "And he that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself" (1 Corinthians 14:4). And the gift of interpretation is given that that same gift might then edify the church. But basically, the exercise of the gift of tongues in one's own personal devotion is a gift that edifies that person in their devotional life. But that is the only gift given for the edification of the individual who is exercising that particular gift. The rest are given for the edification of the church to profit, that all may profit through their exercise.

We will talk more fully concerning the gift of tongues when we get about four lessons or five lessons down the line, as we are dealing with the gifts of the Spirit. Hopefully we will be able to clarify a lot of misunderstanding concerning this particular gift. There is a lot of ignorance that does exist concerning that particular gift.

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom" (1 Corinthians 12:8). And so, we now begin to get into the gifts of the Spirit. And we will take up the gift of the word of wisdom in our next lesson, as we move along in these gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Father, we thank You for the Holy Spirit and for the power of the Holy Spirit. And Lord, we thank You for the gifts of the Spirit. And as we have been told to covet earnestly the best gifts, Lord, we realize that You know what is best for us. And so, we defer to You and to the Holy Spirit that He might give to us those gifts that we can exercise for the benefit of the whole church. We desire those gifts that are best for us and through which we might best edify the body of Christ. Thank You, Lord, that You divide to each man severally as You will. Help us though, that we might be open. Help us, Lord, that there would be nothing that would stand in the way of Your imparting to us those gifts whereby we might be benefited and whereby the church might be benefited. And so, we commit, Lord, ourselves and the exercise of these gifts of the Spirit to You. Use us, Lord, empower us, Lord, as You see fit. In Jesus' name. Amen.