

Day 94, 1 Corinthians 12

by David Servant

David Servant's sermon on 1 Corinthians 12 emphasizes the importance of unity and love among diverse members of the church through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:4-30

Topics: "Church Unity", "Spiritual Gifts"

Description

David Servant preaches on the importance of preserving unity in the church amidst diversity, emphasizing love as the key factor. He highlights how the Spirit's manifold work should unify rather than divide us, and how believers are baptized into one body by one Spirit. Paul's emphasis on the Spirit's distribution of gifts underscores the unity in diversity within the church, cautioning against missing this crucial truth.

Transcript

This really isn't a chapter about spiritual gifts and various ministries. It is a chapter about preserving unity among all the diversity in the church, a chapter about love! The manifold work of the Spirit should not divide us, but be appreciated as being from one source, unifying us. Similarly, even though the church consists of many ethnicities and cultures, one Spirit has baptized us into one body, and one Spirit indwells us all. Paul emphasizes this truth to the point of redundancy in this chapter, hoping we don't miss it!

Paul lists nine spiritual gifts that the Spirit distributes, but notice that his emphasis is not on the gifts, but on the one Spirit who gives all the gifts. Also take note that the spiritual gifts are given as the Spirit wills (12:11), so no one possesses them or can turn them on or off at will.

The names Paul gives to each gift help us, to some degree, to define them. Three are gifts of revelation. When God reveals to one of us information about the future, that is a "word of wisdom," whereas a "word of knowledge" would be a supernatural revelation of current or past facts. "Discerning of spirits" is God-given insight into the spiritual world, so that one might see an angel, Jesus, or a demon. People who claim to know everyone's motives through the "gift of discernment" actually have the "gift of suspicion," a gift not given by the Holy Spirit!

Three are gifts that display God's power. If God gives you a "gift of healing" for someone else, you can heal them, even if they have no faith. The "gift of faith" is a supernatural impartation of faith to receive a miracle, whereas the "effecting of miracles" is simply an ability to do something miraculous.

Three are gifts of utterance, and they were quite prevalent in the Corinthian church. Prophecy is Spirit-inspired utterance in a known language, whereas "various kinds of tongues" is Spirit-inspired utterance in an unknown language. The "interpretation of tongues" is self-explanatory!

Speaking of speaking in other tongues, the obvious answer to Paul's rhetorical question in 12:30, "All do not speak with tongues, do they?" is "no." We will see clearly, however, when we read chapter 14, that the ability to pray in tongues, given when one is baptized in the Spirit, is somewhat different than the spontaneous "gift of tongues" that is only granted to some. That spontaneous gift is what Paul must have been referring to in 12:30.

The problem in today's church with trying to apply Paul's words about preserving unity among the many diverse members of Christ's body is that so much of today's church is not part of Christ's body! Pastors whose congregations consist of sheep mixed with goats who think they are sheep can find little application from this chapter for their churches. God doesn't give spiritual gifts to goats. Goats don't have the Spirit in them. When another member of the body suffers, goats don't care. Goats only care about themselves. Goats are inclined towards division. In reality, they hate Bible Jesus, and so they also hate anyone who truly loves Bible Jesus. A recipe for division!

Paul's words in this chapter only have application among true followers of Christ. They consider their relationships with each other to be sacred. They genuinely care for one another.

In the church, God has appointed "first apostles, second prophets, [and] third teachers"(12:28). There is no biblical evidence that has ever changed. Apostles plant churches by the power of the Holy Spirit. Prophets are frequently granted the gifts of revelation and prophecy. Teachers instruct the church to obey Christ's commandments.

Scripture, of course, also warns against false apostles, prophets and teachers, of which there is no shortage today. False apostles aren't planting churches; they are elevating themselves over existing churches to gain wealth and power. False prophets are prophesying to people what they want to hear in order to enrich themselves. And false teachers also tickle people's ears, downplaying or ignoring any teaching on holiness, again, in order to make money. Money is indeed the driving force behind every wolf in sheep's clothing. Beware!

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