

# Holy Spirit 6

by William MacDonald

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*William MacDonald explores the role of the Holy Spirit in guidance, the nature of spiritual gifts, and the tripartite nature of man in his sermon 'Holy Spirit 6'.*

**Duration:** 44:18

**Scripture:** Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-10, 1 Corinthians 12:28, 1 Corinthians 12:31 - 13:7, Ephesians 4:11

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of spiritual gifts and their importance in Christian life and service. He emphasizes the need to use these gifts in love and humility, rather than becoming proud or seeking personal gain. The speaker also mentions that different individuals may have different gifts, such as preaching or pastoral care, and that it is important for a local assembly to recognize and pray for these gifts. The sermon concludes by highlighting the significance of love in exercising spiritual gifts, as emphasized in 1 Corinthians 13.

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## Transcript

We have a couple of questions, first of all, today, and I'm glad that these questions come in. And the material we're going to be going over in the days ahead, some of it's rather controversial, and you might not agree with what I say, so do feel free to put in questions or to disagree. I always say that any teacher worth his salt can be challenged, and if he can't sustain it from the Word of God, he should drop it.

Here's one, in regards to confirmation in the mouths of two or three witnesses, please tell if you agree that the Holy Spirit and the believer are two. The point is, I said that we're entitled to go to God, and when we're seeking guidance, ask him to confirm it in the mouths of two or three witnesses. The question says, please tell me if you agree that the indwelling Holy Spirit and the believer are two.

Well, of course they are two, they are two persons, two personalities, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they're two witnesses. I don't see how I can be a witness myself, I see how the Holy Spirit can witness in me and witness through the Word of God and give me an inner consciousness of his will. But I would still seek two distinct witnesses apart from myself, I think, if I were seeking guidance.

Here's another question. Paul speaks of a man's spirit in 1 Corinthians 14, 14. You might turn to that 1 Corinthians 14, 14.

It says, for if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. Paul speaks of a man's spirit in 1 Corinthians 14, his spirit prays. Does a man's spirit become regenerated or is it merely added to by the Holy Spirit? Does the Holy Spirit alter in any way our own spirit? Is our spirit in need of regeneration? Man is a tripartite being.

He is spirit, soul, and body. Two parts of him are invisible, one part is visible. Sin affected all parts of man's being.

It affected our bodies, the very fact we have sickness. It affected our soul, our emotional life. And it certainly affected our spirit, because it says we're dead in trespasses and in sin.

When it says we're dead in trespasses, that doesn't mean our spirit is dead. For instance, an unsafe person, his spirit could be very much alive. He could be involved in the occult and his spirit would be alive.

But when it says that when we speak of our spirit as being dead, we mean dead toward God. And when you think of that expression, dead in trespasses and sin, think of that. We ourselves are very much alive, and our spirits are very much alive, but as far as God is concerned, they're dead.

You know, God is trying to speak to us in response to the corpse. Okay, in salvation, redemption affects every part of man. One part is still future.

Our souls and our spirits are already redeemed. Our bodies will be redeemed when we go home to be with the Lord. So in answer to the question, our souls are redeemed, our spirits are redeemed through the work of the Lord Jesus, and our bodies will be yet redeemed.

I think if this literal body wasn't raised from the dead and changed, Satan would have an accusation against God. He could say, I affected three parts of man, and you only redeemed two parts. So all parts of man are going to be redeemed ultimately.

I don't know that it speaks about the spirit being regenerated. I think that refers to the person as such, spirit, soul, and body regenerated. Does the spirit alter in any way our own spirit? Is our spirit in need of regeneration? Yes, I think our spirit is in need of, I would use the word redemption there.

Our spirit needs to be bought back by the Lord Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 14, just let me, if you have your Bibles open, just let me comment on this. It's a very difficult verse.

Let me see if I can tell you what I believe it says. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirits pray it. That means I know what I'm praying, but my understanding is unfruitful.

That means nobody else knows what I'm praying. That expression, my understanding, is capable of too many things. It means what I understand or the understanding of me by others.

And that's what it means here. When it says my understanding, it doesn't mean what I understand. It means what other people understand when I'm speaking.

I don't want to confuse it needlessly, but it's what they call a subjective genitive and an objective genitive. The subject, that's what I understand. The objective genitive, what others understand of me.

Let me give you another illustration of it. Isaiah chapter 53, it says, By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. Does that mean we're justified by what Jesus knows? It doesn't mean that at all.

It means we're justified when we come to know Jesus. Do you get that? There's a difference. It really means by the knowledge of him shall my righteous servant justify many.

It's tricky, it's hard, isn't it, to get that? But that's what it really means. By the knowledge of him, when we come to know him, we're justified. It isn't by what he knows that we're justified, but by our, we say, whom to know is life eternal.

You follow me? Here, when it says, My spirit prays, that means I know what I'm praying, but my understanding is unfruitful, nobody else knows. The understanding of me is unfruitful. Say, how do you know that's what it means? Because it goes on to say, how can you say amen? How can somebody else say amen? When you finish, they don't know what you're saying.

Doesn't it say that? I will pray, what is it then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding of. That is, I will pray so as to be understood. I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding of that, so as to be understood.

Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupies the room of the unlearned say amen, at thy giving of thanks? What it's saying is that a man stood up in the assembly and he spoke in a tongue, he prayed in a tongue, he sang in a tongue. Nobody knew what he was saying, there was no interpretation. How could they say amen? He might know what he's saying, but nobody else knew what he was saying.

I hope that's clear, but isn't, maybe we'll have a chance to clarify it more. If you ask questions, that's a good way of clarifying. Okay, let's first of all just look at, see what we've been over, and where we are now.

Here's a little list, we're really getting down the list, aren't we? The ministries of the Holy Spirit, and we closed last night with He Gives Gifts, 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 1 through 31. Actually, we could have put there 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14, but we'll catch up with that too. I think instead of just going over these, we'll just pass on and move on to the subject of gifts and ask ourselves the question, what is a gift? That's on the next, no, that's on the next transparency, Brother Frank.

And you'll have to open up that big sheet there. There we go. The gifts of the Spirit.

That's good, that's fine, the way you have it there, that's very good. What is a gift? A gift is a supernatural ability given by the Holy Spirit to a person when he says he may have one gift, he may have many gifts. It does not have to do with natural talents.

It's not the same as natural talents. In fact, God likes to take a man that doesn't have any talent in this direction and give him a gift, so that people looking on say, well, it certainly isn't the man. He doesn't have that ability.

It must be the Lord. The Lord likes to do that. He likes to choose nobodies to exalt somebody.

So I think, when I think of a gift, I think of a supernatural power or enablement or ability which the Holy Spirit gives to believers. You don't pray for it. You receive it sovereignly by the Spirit of God.

But we should know what our gifts are. Everybody has a gift or gifts. And it's very important for us as believers to know what that gift is.

And I really do think that we fail in this regard. I think that in the assemblies we fail in this regard. How can I know what my gift is? Well, there are several ways in which you can know.

First of all, you have to expose yourself to various forms of Christian service. And that helps you to know what your gift is. For instance, a young man might engage in various forms of evangelism.

God has given him the gift of evangelism. He'll know it pretty soon. People will come under conviction of sin.

People will trust the Savior. He'll see it in the results that are produced. You can find out what your gift is by people, older, godly, mature people, suggesting to you that you have a gift in a certain direction.

Bill Goffin said that you find out what your gift is when you have the maximum effectiveness with the minimum fatigue. Well, that's very good. The maximum effectiveness with the minimum fatigue.

Let me give you an illustration. If Tulsa asked me to come for two weeks of gospel meetings, you know, preach the gospel for two weeks, I would be an exhausted wreck by the end of two weeks. You know why? Because that's not my gift, preaching the gospel.

That's not my gift. And I'm sorry to say there probably wouldn't be much in the way of results either. But I can't help that, and I don't worry about that.

I can rejoice when I see a man like Billy Graham preaching the gospel and throwing out the net and drawing in the fish. It's wonderful. I rejoice at that.

It's just not my gift at all. That's all. And I know that.

So that's a good way, isn't it? The maximum effectiveness with the minimum fatigue. And I think as we expose ourselves to various forms of Christian service, the Lord confirms in our own hearts and in the lives of others just what that gift might be. Now, the gifts are named in Romans 12, verses 6-8.

1 Corinthians 12, 8-10. 12, 28. And Ephesians 4, 11.

If you put them all together, is that a complete list of gifts? Some people believe it is. Some people believe the gifts are only suggestive. Probably safer to say that when you put them all together, those are the gifts of the Spirit.

Let's look at some of them. We won't go over all of them today. If you have any questions about some, feel free to put in a question.

But let's look in 1 Corinthians 12, verses 8-10. It says, verse 7, But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. That means for the profit of all.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom. The word of wisdom. What is the word of wisdom? It is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Well, what it really means is, let's say in an assembly in a local church, a very difficult problem arises. And the brothers get together and they talk back and forth and everything seems to be cloudy. And a brother speaks and he has a solution to the problem and everybody sees immediately, as soon as he says it, that that is the right Spirit-given solution to the problem.

I think that's a word of wisdom. Wisdom means knowledge applied. And when a man is able to speak to a specific situation with that Spirit-given wisdom, that is the word of wisdom.

To another, the word of knowledge. In 1 Corinthians 13, it's spoken of as the gift of knowledge. People have trouble with this.

This means knowledge supernaturally given. Doesn't it mean knowledge in itself? Doesn't it say in 1 Corinthians 13 that knowledge shall cease? It says, whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

You mean in heaven we won't know anything? Will we know less in heaven than we know here? It doesn't mean that. It means knowledge, the supernatural giving of knowledge. Such as what? Paul said, Behold, I show you a mystery.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. Nobody ever knew that before. That was a new revelation.

How did Paul get it? Knowledge supernaturally given to him. To another, the word of knowledge. To another, faith by the same Spirit.

We all have faith, but there's such a thing as a gift of faith. And I think when most of us think of the gift of faith, our minds go to George Mueller of Bristol, don't they? A man of tremendous faith in the living God. He started that orphanage, and in answer to prayers saw millions come in without making a need known.

You all know of how he'd come there in the morning, children would all come in, sit down for the meal, there was no food. And Mueller would say, let's give thanks for the food. They'd give thanks for the food and there'd be a knock on the door.

The bakery, the local bakery, had had an overproduction the day before, weren't able to sell it, and they wanted to know if you could use this bakery good. Right after he'd given thanks for the food. The gift of faith.

It's unusual and it's supernatural. When you think of the gifts of the Spirit, don't think about anything natural. Think of what goes beyond the natural, where it's God directly working.

To another, the gifts of healing, of healings. It really says, it's plural gifts and plural healings. The gifts of healings.

This is something supernatural again. And of course you see it in the book of Acts, in operation. Some people believe that gifts of healings means that a certain person might have a gift with regard to tuberculosis and another with regard to allergies or something like, I don't know.

I really don't know. To another, the working of miracles. And we know what miracles are.

I should pause and say that just because you see a miracle, however, doesn't mean that God is at work. Good to remember that. Satan can perform miracles too.

So miracles to be of God must be by the Spirit of God and must be in accordance with the Word of God. When the Antichrist comes, he's going to perform miracles, isn't he? So all a miracle means is a supernatural power, but it doesn't necessarily mean God. But here, it's miracles God performs through a

man, a gift of miracles.

To another, prophecy. In its original meaning in the New Testament, a prophet was a mouthpiece of God. He was a spokesman for God.

And the utterances of the prophets and the apostles gave rise to the New Testament. They spoke the Word of God. I personally don't believe we have prophets today in the primary sense of the New Testament.

We don't need them because we have the ministry of the prophets preserved for us here. And if somebody arises and says, well, I have a message from God. It's an addition to the Word of God.

Well, we wouldn't accept it, would we? Because this is the faith once for all delivered unto the saints. I don't believe we have prophets in the original. We have other men who speak and women even who speak prophetic words in the sense that they're built, they're based upon the Word of God, prophetic in that sense.

I think Tozer was a prophet in a sense, not in the primary sense of the New Testament. He lashed out against sin and called the people back to God. A prophet did that.

But of course he didn't give an inspired utterance. Prophecy today is based on the Word of God that we already have. To another discerning of spirits, this is a separate and distinct gift of the Holy Spirit.

A man with a gift discerning of spirits, he's able to detect a fraud, an imposter, when he comes along. Other people could be very gullible and often aren't. To another diver's kinds of tongues.

The gift of tongues, of course there's a lot of different opinions about this. Some believe that tongues were definite foreign languages as they were in Acts 2. Some people believe that tongues are the language of angels. Some people believe that tongues are ecstatic utterances.

That the human soul is capable of emotions that cannot be expressed in human language and so forth. And we're not going to settle that problem here. There's just no agreement on the subject.

For me, the simplest solution is that tongues were definite foreign languages. And you have that in the book of Acts, don't you? On the day of Pentecost, they had come together, Jewish people had come together from all over the then-known Bible world, and they heard these Galileans get up and speak in the different languages. They had never studied them, but they were able to speak.

And the word that's used there in Acts 2 is dialectos. It means even in their own dialect. Wow.

It's almost as if somebody got up in Italy and spoke English with a southern accent. You all. So I believe that's what the gift of tongues is.

You can disagree and it's okay. To another, the interpretation of tongues, this was a separate gift. In other words, if a man would get up and speak in the assembly in Corinth, and let's say he spoke in Italian, another man would get up and interpret what was spoken in that language.

But all these work at the one and the selfsame spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. And then, of course, if you go over to the last part of that chapter, you have other gifts mentioned. Apostles, verse 28.

An apostle was a sent one. It was a man commissioned by the Lord Jesus. He must have been a witness of Christ in resurrection.

He had the ability to perform miracles to confirm his message. We're going to see that in Hebrews chapter 2. I don't believe we have apostles today in the primary sense of the New Testament. I believe we have men whose work is kind of apostolic.

For instance, somebody was talking with me about George Campbell, a young brother from an assembly in California years ago. Went up to Labrador and Newfoundland. I think he saw at least 17 assemblies planted up there.

There's something apostolic about his work, but he'd be the last in the world to claim to be an apostle. But what he did was similar to the work of an apostle. That's what I'm saying.

Home with the Lord now. You might turn to Ephesians 2.20 in this connection. Do we have apostles and prophets today? Ephesians 2.20. It says, "...and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." This speaks of the new building of God.

And it says, "...upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." First of all, let me explain. The apostles and prophets aren't the foundation of the Church. God forbid.

When it says here the foundation of the apostles and prophets, it means they laid the foundation in what they taught about the Lord Jesus. Other foundations can no man lay. And that is laid, which is Christ Jesus, the Lord.

Christ is the foundation. But they laid, the apostles and prophets, laid the foundation of the Church in what they taught about the Lord Jesus. And you have it right here in the pages of the New Testament.

Now, how often do you lay the foundation of a building? Only once. The foundation has been laid. It was laid by the apostles and the prophets.

From then on, it's a matter of building on it. Paul says that, doesn't he, in 1 Corinthians 3? He said, I've laid another, I've laid the foundation and another buildeth thereon. Buildeth thereon how? By ministry, by teaching.

1 Corinthians 3, 10. According to the grace of God, which is given me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and another buildeth thereon. But let everyone take heed how he buildeth thereon.

So, it seems to me the foundation has been laid once and for all by the apostles and prophets. They passed off the scene. Their ministry is preserved for us here.

It's our responsibility as servants of the Lord to build on that foundation. Christ Jesus the Lord. I just mention that because I don't think we have apostles and prophets in the primary sense of the Word.

Then teachers. A teacher is a man who can take the Word of God, explain the Word of God, and apply the Word of God. I think that's very important.

He can take the Scriptures. He can open them up to people. And then he can apply them home to the hearts of people.

The application is tremendously important. It would really be possible, for instance, to give a lecture on prophetic matters and not make any practical application. I think a good teacher does make a practical application.

Then there's the gift of helps, verse 28. I've seen some people here at Ozark Bible Camp who have been blessed with the gift of helps. It's just part of their being.

Every time you look at them, they're serving. Keep your eyes open. Some of the best sermons at Ozark aren't preached from the pulpit.

They're preached in living color by the people that you're rubbing shoulders with. Government. The gift of government.

Now this is distinct too. And I link this somewhat with the work of elders. Elders are not said to be a gift, but governments are a gift.

It really has to do with administration, I believe, in the local church. You either have it or you don't. If you don't have it, don't weep.

You've got something else. Then it says, and divers kinds of tongues. We have the tongues listed.

We have them here. We have them in Romans chapter 12. We have them in Ephesians chapter 4. I really believe in Ephesians chapter 4 that these are what we might call special service gifts.

Turn to Ephesians 4. These are just a little bit different in the way they're classified here. Verse 11. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 11, it says, and he gave some apostles, some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ, the building up of the body of Christ.

Now, I really believe that the reason these gifts are here is because these are what we might call special service gifts. These gifts were given in a special way to build up the saints to carry on the work of service. This is the very opposite of what is known as the clerical system.

Under the clerical system, one man does all the preaching. He does the work. The saints sit there and warm the pews and put their money in the collection.

It was never God's intention. Never God's intention that the saints should become perpetually dependent upon a man, but rather that the gifts should be used to build up the saints. Let me just say it this way.

The world will never be evangelized the way God intended it to be as long as there's a clerical system. As long as the work of evangelism depends on a few college seminary trained men occupying pulpits, the world's never going to be evangelized. It isn't until the church is mobilized that the work can ever be done.

And that's what this passage is talking about. Who is to do the work of ministry here? The saints. It was for that reason that, for instance, the apostle Paul never spent more than two years in any one place.

He spent two years in Ephesus at one time. He spent a total of three years during his ministry in Ephesus, but at one time just two years in Ephesus. And that's why Timothy and Titus, Paul's assistants, they're sometimes spoken of as the bishop of the church in Ephesus, the bishop of the church in Crete.

Nonsense! These men weren't bishops of a church. These men were itinerating. They were troubleshooters for Paul, moving around, building churches, strengthening churches in the things of the Lord.

So there you have the gift. And we've defined the gift and we've listed some of the gifts. There are others that we haven't mentioned.

Okay, we go on. Points to notice with regard to the gift. First of all, just down a little, they were given for the common good.

This is very, very important and I want to emphasize this. 1 Corinthians 12, we've read it before several times, but it needs to be emphasized. In fact, I wish some brother that has another version of the Bible would read it for me because it will be clearer.

Anybody have the NASB? Would you read it, Merlin, please? Verse 7 of 1 Corinthians 12. For the common good. Anybody else have a version that says something similar? Is that Darby? Would you read, Darby? For profit.

But it really means for the profit of all. It really means that. Okay, anybody have the NIV or any other version? Okay.

Yeah, that's the same as the NASB. Very good. Okay, that's very important.

In other words, what was happening in Corinth was using the gift for self-display or self-edification. I want you to see this. In other words, a man, and this really happened, a man would get up in the assembly in Corinth, and let's say he'd speak in German.

He had never studied German, never took a course in it, and he'd get up and he'd jabber away in German without interpretation, and what he was really saying in his heart was, I hope you people are impressed. I never learned German, and here I am speaking in German. And incidentally, it was something that was given miraculously.

It came instantly, and it never left. Because the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. And Paul is correcting that here in verse 17.

He said, look, God didn't give you gifts for selfish display or for self-edification. He gave you gifts to profit others. That's good.

You see, because we're a body, the body of Christ, and everyone has a gift, and we need one another, and we should use what we have for one another. That's where love comes in. That's why 1 Corinthians 13 is sandwiched between 12 and 14.

Love. Why love? Because love thinks of others, not of self. That's why.

And if you're really exercising a gift in love, you'll be thinking of how others will benefit, not yourself. Very important, I think, to see that in connection with this whole matter. Okay, the gifts were given for the common good.

We go on. The Spirit divides gifts individually just as He wills. 1 Corinthians 12, verse 11.

But all these work of that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He wills. That means that the giving of gifts is a sovereign work of the Spirit of God. Man doesn't have any part in it at all.

And I believe when you were saying you were given a gift or you were given gifts, I don't see anywhere where we should pray for a certain gift individually or wish we had another gift individually. That's not the point. The point is, find out what your gift is and use it for the common good.

The sovereign giving of gifts by the Holy Spirit. Okay, we'll go on. Members of the human body are not all the same, so the members of Christ do not all have the same gift.

Well, certainly the members of the body are not all the same. And Paul is saying that very delicately in chapter 12. Well, think of a human body now.

Think of a human being and he just has one member. He doesn't have feet. He doesn't have arms.

He doesn't have eyes or ears. Let's say he just had a mouth. Say, don't be ridiculous.

Well, that's really what Paul is saying in a very polite way in chapter 12. The body has many members? Not one member. You have a unity in the body, but you have diversity in the body.

And so the members of Christ do not all have the same gift. Let's read it. Verses 12 through 26.

For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is... Now, actually, what it says in the original language of the New Testament is, so also is the Christ. The Christ. The only time in the Bible that that expression is used, like this, the word Christ in verse 12 means not just Jesus in heaven, but it means the head in heaven and all the members on earth.

Remarkable. A remarkable use of the word Christ. Does Darby have the Christ there? I thought he did.

Is that clear what I'm saying there? It says, for as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ. And the Christ there means the head in heaven and all his members on earth. The only time I think you'll ever find the word used that way in the New Testament.

For by one spirit, were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink of one spirit. But the body is not one member, get it? But many. You see, in Corinth, they were creating the idea that everybody should have one gift, the same gift.

And you hear a lot of that today too. Paul is refuting that. What kind of a monstrosity would such a body be, he's saying.

If the foot shall say, because I'm not the hand, I'm not of the body. Is it therefore not of the body? If the ear shall say, behold, because I'm not the eye, I'm not of the body. Is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? The whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now have God set the members, every one of the body, as it hath pleased him.

Not as it hath pleased you, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? Now are they many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Nay, much more, those members of the body which seem to me more feeble are necessary. Those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, from these we bestow more abundant honor, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need, but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another.

Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. So what it means in a practical way is you and I should know what our gifts are, gifts is, gifts are.

And when we see somebody else with a gift, just rejoice there, it's marvelous. I can't do that. Now my cup of tea, I'm sure glad to see him doing it.

All part of the body of Christ. So it goes on to say in the next two lines, no one should feel worthless, and no one should feel independent of others. And this really is a great thing.

This eliminates jealousy in the body of Christ. When you see other people with gifts you don't have, and you realize it's a part of God's marvelous working in human life. Okay, the next thing is it's wrong to suggest that all believers should have any one gift.

And I went over that last night, but I'll go over it again. In verses 28 and 29, all of those questions require a negative answer. Does anyone have a modern Bible where it's given that way? I think some modern versions do give it that way.

But what it really says in the original language of the New Testament says, verse 29, all are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? And it goes right on down. And it calls for a negative answer. And we've already seen that it would be quite a monstrosity if there were only one gift and all had that same gift.

Okay, next point is, and I think I went over that before, a local assembly should earnestly desire the greater gifts. 1231, it says, but covet or desire earnestly the greater gifts, and a still more excellent way shall I unto you. And I mentioned before that in that verse it's not speaking to individuals, it's speaking to you plural.

It's speaking to a local assembly. In other words, a local assembly might feel the need of, let's say, the gift of government. When they're entitled to get before the Lord and say, Lord, send somebody to us with real leadership ability.

We need strong spiritual leadership. We need someone or ones with the gift of government. Send that person.

A local assembly can do that. You can't do that as an individual. You can't say, Lord, give me the gift of government.

Either have it or you don't. That's the way it's going to be. But a local assembly can feel its need for somebody with a pastoral gift, a shepherd heart for God's people, and pray that God will send somebody along like that.

I think that's helpful to see. Just remember that it's plural there in verse 31, not singular. And then, finally on this page, love thinks of others, not of self.

Oh, I skipped one, haven't I? Unless a gift is exercised in love, it's useless. Well, just leave those two on. And that's what chapter 13 is all about.

Let's read it through verse 7. A lot of people used to think that chapter 13 was a parenthesis. They thought that Paul had the mind of a jackrabbit and he just jumped all over the landscape. Huh? Paul didn't have the mind of a jackrabbit.

Everything he writes, he writes by inspiration of the Spirit of God. And they're the commandments of God. And actually, the flow of thought here is beautiful, beautiful.

And he goes on to say, Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I'm become a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains and have not love, I'm nothing. Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not love, profit is me nothing.

Why all this fuss about love? Because he's talking about the exercise of gifts and gifts should be exercised in love. And love thinks of others. Love suffereth long in his kind.

Love envieth not. There's a brother that has a gift and you don't have it. You don't envy him.

You thank God for him that you're acting in love. Love vaunteth not itself. You know, spiritual pride is a terrible danger.

God gives a man such a gift that he can hold an audience in the palm of his hand and hearts are stirred beneath the influence of the Word. Very easy to become proud, isn't it? Very easy. Terrific snare in Christian life and service.

Love doesn't act that way. And read this all in connection with the matter of gifts. It's not puffed up.

Doth not behave itself unseemly. Seeketh not her own. That's it.

Her own what? Her own anything. Her own welfare. Her own edification.

Her own pleasure. Seeketh not her own. Is not easily provoked.

Thinketh no evil. Rejoiceth not in iniquity. Rejoiceth in the truth.

Beareth all things. Believeth all things. Hopeth all things.

Endureth all things. That's real love. And Paul is saying, look, dear friends, exercise your gift in love.

They weren't doing that in Corinth. They were abusing the gifts in Corinth. They were using them for self, not for others.

And Paul says, you've got it all wrong.

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