

# (1 Corinthians) ch.12:1-12:21

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual gifts, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the diversity of gifts and ministries in the church, highlighting the need for humility, unity, and the common good.*

**Duration:** 43:46

**Scripture:** Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:1-14, Ephesians 4:4

**Topics:** "Spiritual Gifts", "Church Unity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the different spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, specifically focusing on the gifts of faith and healing. The speaker emphasizes that these gifts should be exercised under the lordship and authority of Jesus Christ, and should lead others to come under that lordship as well. The speaker also highlights the importance of unity in the body of Christ, despite the diversity of gifts, ministries, and effects. The analogy of the human body is used to illustrate this concept, with different parts having different functions but working together for the overall functioning of the body.

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## Transcript

Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 1. Paul had been writing to the Corinthians concerning a number of matters about which they had asked questions, as we have been considering in our previous studies. And now he comes to a subject concerning which they may or may not have asked him a question, but concerning which there was a lot of confusion in the assembly at Corinth. And because there was confusion concerning this matter, God was being dishonored and Paul wanted to set matters right.

And this was concerning spiritual gifts. Now chapter 12 and chapter 14 are almost the only two chapters in the entire New Testament that deal at any length with the subject of spiritual gifts. And verse 1 of chapter 12 is a very relevant word for many, many believers today.

Verse 1 of 1 Corinthians 12 says, Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant. Now the sad thing is that many believers are ignorant about spiritual gifts. But the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, says, Concerning spiritual gifts, I do not want you to be ignorant.

And when we realize that Paul was expressing the mind of God as revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, we can say that it is God himself speaking to us, saying that God does not want us to be ignorant about spiritual gifts and their use in our personal life and particularly in the church. In verse 2 he says, You know

that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols however you were led. In other words, you just happened to go whichever way you felt like going when you were following idols.

And even in the worship of idols we consider in chapter 10 that there are evil spirits behind them and we know that evil spirits have supernatural abilities. And the point of Paul mentioning this here in verse 2 is that when you Corinthian Christians were involved in idolatry and the contact with evil spirits that that brought, you also had certain supernatural experiences. But in those days you were led astray.

However you were led means whichever way you happened to be led by those spirits that were operating behind those idols. But now he says I want to make something very clear to you. I want you to know this, he says that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says Jesus is a cursed or as the Living Bible says, Now you are meeting people who claim to speak messages from the Spirit of God.

How can you know whether they are really inspired by God or whether they are fakes? Here is the test. No one who is moved and under the influence of the Holy Spirit can ever say that Jesus is cursed, that's clear. And no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

Now it's not just a question of saying it with our lips because Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 22 onwards that not everyone who says to him Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven because there are many who say Lord, Lord but do not keep his word even though they seem to exercise certain gifts as Matthew 7 verse 22 and 23 says. There are people who will come to the Lord and say Lord we prophesy in your name, we cast out demons in your name, they call Jesus Lord, Lord and yet he rejects them in the final day. But it is a response of the Spirit.

It's our Spirit saying Jesus is Lord. In other words, it is through the Holy Spirit that a person makes Jesus Lord of his life. Not just Saviour but Lord of his life.

It's very interesting in the New Testament to see that there are two confessions that are attributed to the Holy Spirit's operation in a believer. One is here in 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 3. Jesus is Lord. The other confession is mentioned in 1 John 4 verse 2 where he says by this you know the Spirit of God.

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God and the opposite of that is the spirit of the Antichrist. So there are two confessions basically that the Holy Spirit seeks to make through the believer. And by this we know whether we are under the influence of the Holy Spirit or evil spirits.

In the exercise of spiritual gifts, can we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord? Can we confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh? That is the test. Two important confessions concerning Jesus Christ. One that he is Lord or Jehovah.

Jesus is the Old Testament Jehovah, God Almighty. This is a very important confession. Jesus is Lord.

Not one of the Lords as many people in other religions would say but Jesus is the Lord. And the second confession which is more of a problem sometimes for many Christians. Jesus Christ came in the flesh.

That too is an important confession prompted by the Holy Spirit. A confession that comes from deep within our spirits that Jesus Christ our Lord came in the flesh. And there is only one flesh that the New Testament speaks of.

That is the flesh that we have as human beings today. Jesus Christ came in this flesh. And these two confessions are very, very important and need to be remembered right at the outset when we consider the subject of spiritual gifts.

Because if we do not recognize these two confessions, then we can go astray in the matter of spiritual gifts. And that is why right at the outset of this chapter on the exercise of spiritual gifts, Paul begins with the subject of Jesus Christ is Lord. Now many have gone to two extremes on this matter of spiritual gifts.

Some have gone to the extreme of using it for personal promotion and gain and forget that this whole subject begins with the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And there are others who in reaction against this extremism that they have seen in certain believers avoid this subject altogether. And the devil is quite happy with both groups, those who have gone off a tangent and those who have reacted against that and have nothing to do with spiritual gifts.

But the Lord wants us to walk in the middle path. Jesus Christ is Lord. In other words, everything that is going to be spoken of in this chapter must be under the headship and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Because the Holy Spirit who gives these gifts is constantly confessing that Jesus is Lord. And he cannot give a gift to a person without the intention of using that person and that gift for proclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord by his life and by his lip. And when a person is proclaiming himself or his own personality we can say that the Holy Spirit is not behind that.

And there has been a tremendous amount of abuse in this area and this is why it is very important to begin this subject with this confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. It is impossible for us to see the proper use of spiritual gifts in any church unless the Lordship of Jesus Christ is proclaimed. Equally, the fact that Jesus Christ came in the flesh.

Because it is because he came in the flesh that he is an example for us. He was Lord even before he came to earth. Before he took that name Jesus as the Son of God he was Lord even then.

And it would have been right to proclaim him as Lord even before he came to earth. But it was only after he came to earth that there comes the possibility of this second confession that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. And why is this important in the exercise of spiritual gifts? Because in 2 John verse 7 John says that a person who does not confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is the spirit of the Antichrist and it is a deceiver.

And in the midst of deception we need to see that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. It was in our flesh with all its weaknesses and limitations that he lived the life that he lived. And exercised spiritual gifts when he was on earth.

He was anointed with the Holy Spirit at the river Jordan at the time of his baptism and thereafter he exercised spiritual gifts as one who had come in our flesh. And therefore in Jesus we see an example as to how we can use and exercise the spiritual gifts ourselves. So there are two confessions that we need to keep in mind right at the outset.

One that Jesus Christ is Lord and that is that every gift must lead to the Lordship of Jesus Christ must be exercised under the Lordship and authority of Christ must be to lead others to come under that Lordship. And secondly to see that we came in our flesh and exercised these gifts in the flesh and thereby we look at him not only as our Lord but also as an example in the way these gifts are to be exercised. When we

look at Jesus' life we find very often when he healed the sick or even raised the dead he told people not to inform others he did supernatural miracles and it was always concealed everything was for the glory of God.

And there we have a wonderful example of how we are to exercise the same gifts. And so this first word I do not want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts has great relevance for the time in which we live and if we take the balance of scripture and see the warning scripture gives we can exercise these spiritual gifts to the building up of the church in our day. Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 4. In our last study we were considering verses 1 to 3 a very important introductory passage to the subject of spiritual gifts.

First of all telling us in verse 1 that God does not want us to be ignorant of spiritual gifts and their use in the church. And secondly, verse 2 that in the past the Corinthians were led astray with supernatural manifestations through their contact with evil spirits through idolatry. And third, in verse 3 that the Holy Spirit exercises these gifts under the Lordship of Jesus Christ leading people to the Lordship of Christ.

And if these facts are borne in mind then we can be protected. We also saw from 1 John 4 verse 2 that the spirit of God is identified by the fact that he confesses that Jesus Christ came in our flesh and that there he is an example for us to follow. And now he deals with the subject of spiritual gifts itself and says in verse 4 there are varieties of gifts but the same spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives different gifts they are called gifts of grace. In other words, freely given not because we deserve them but of God's free, sovereign grace. They are given to different people unlike the fruit of the spirit mentioned in Galatians 5, 22 and 23 there are nine fruits mentioned there in Galatians 5, 22 and 23 and every believer needs all nine.

But here there are nine gifts mentioned in the passage from here to verse 10 but these are given separately by the spirit to different believers. The same spirit but many different gifts. And it says here further in verse 5 that there are differences of ministries but the same Lord.

In other words, there are different ways in which these gifts can be exercised. Different ministries having these same gifts but with different ministries. And then third, it says in verse 6 there are different effects that these gifts produce.

There are different ways of exercising these gifts. So there are three things mentioned here and the unity of the Trinity is seen here. In verse 4 the same Holy Spirit in verse 5 the same Lord Jesus Christ and verse 6 the same God the Father.

And so the Trinity is there and the spirit gives varieties of gifts. Verse 4, different gifts to different people but even though the spirit has given different gifts even with the same gifts among two believers the Lord Jesus Christ can exercise these gifts through different ministries through these believers. For example, we read in Ephesians 4 that Christ has given to the church apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists and shepherds and these gifts are given by the Lord Jesus to the church different ministries.

And yet these different ministries may be exercising the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given. And so we find there are varieties of gifts given by the spirit and varieties of ministries exercising perhaps the same gift or different gifts under the control of the Lord Jesus Christ who gives them to the church and then varieties of effects that means different ways in which these ministries are fulfilled and different ways in which these

ministries are manifested in the church through different believers through different ways in which God works. But ultimately it is the same God who achieves his purposes through all of them.

The working whereby these gifts are wrought is various. There is a variety even though there may be the same gift and the same ministry yet God may have a variety. God is a God of variety.

And we find the word variety in verse 4, verse 5 and verse 6. Look at the trees that God has planted down a road. God has made them to grow up and each tree though it may have come from a similar type of seed is different from the other. This is God's way.

Two snowflakes are not alike anywhere in the world. Two fingerprints are not alike. There is variety in God's creation.

But in man's ordering of things there is uniformity. A block of flats made down a road look exactly alike down to the last nut and bolt. And there is a difference between the way God works and the way man works.

Man loves uniformity. And even in a church very often you find pastors and leaders trying to make everybody the same. But God doesn't do it that way.

It says there are varieties of gifts varieties of ministries and varieties of effects. And it is in this diversity that God seeks to manifest a unity. And he goes on later on in the chapter to speak about the unity of the human body.

In the human body there are various gifts we can say. The eye, the ear, the hand the legs and so on. And there are varieties of ministries.

There are various functions fulfilled. For example the hand itself is used not just for one purpose. We can use our hand for wiping our face.

We can use our hand for delicate work of painting or writing a letter. We can use our hand for working on some machine. Varieties of ministries with the same instrument and varieties of effects.

Different people can use their hand in different ways to different effects even in the matter of painting alone. And there we can understand what these three things mentioned in verse 4, 5 and 6 mean. Varieties of gifts varieties of ministries and varieties of effects.

But just like the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, though different are yet one in the same way God desires. Like Jesus prayed in John 17 that we all may be one as He and the Father were one. So the gifts are not meant to divide.

Unfortunately the gifts have brought division in large sections of Christendom and among believers today but that is not God's will. That's the work of the devil. God intended that these different gifts should all function together.

The sad thing is when one person thinks that his particular gift is the most important or when he thinks that his particular ministry is the most important or when he thinks that everybody should have the same effects through the exercise of the gifts as he has when he exercises the gifts. All these are the mark of immaturity. Another thing we see here in verse 7 is that to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

In other words, each man is given a gift by the Spirit in the church and the purpose is that he may use it for the good of the whole church and of other people. Now this teaches us that it is possible for every believer to receive some spiritual gift, not the same one, perhaps not the most outstanding one, but some gift, some contribution every believer can make to the church, just like every part of the body makes some contribution to the body. There is no part of the human body that God created without a purpose.

There may be some parts which doctors haven't yet discovered why they are there in the body, but God has certainly created every part of the body with a purpose and so with every believer God has given to everyone some gift and some manifestation. The word used here, manifestation, indicates that the Spirit manifests or shows himself through a particular believer in a particular way. And this is where the fact that each of us are different makes a great contribution to the building of the church.

Thank God that we are not all the same. We are all different and God wants to manifest something of his glory and his grace through each of us according to our own personality. The only thing he seeks to remove from us is our sin.

He never seeks to destroy our personality. Remember this, that God is not against our personality. He is only against sin, which he wants to remove.

And even when he has removed sin from two people and brought them both to a life of victory over sin, their personalities may still remain different. And that is the way God works through us. Because through our distinctive personalities, he seeks to manifest himself.

Something that the Holy Spirit seeks to show of the glory of Jesus Christ, of the lordship of Jesus Christ, through a particular personality, through your personality, in a way in which he cannot show it effectively through mine. And this is why God has made even two sexes, man and woman, so that there are certain distinctive traits that God can manifest through men and women. And the ultimate aim of it all, as mentioned in verse seven, is that this is for the common good.

In other words, everybody should benefit. The ultimate goal of all these gifts is that the whole church may benefit. If only we would follow some of these simple rules concerning the gifts of the spirit, mentioned in verses one to seven, we could avoid a tremendous amount of abuse in their exercise in the church today.

Many have concentrated much on verses eight, nine and ten, and we will come to that next week, but it's very important to lay a good foundation for the use of these gifts mentioned in verses eight to ten by studying carefully the first seven verses. Everything is for the common good. No gift is meant for personal gain.

Every gift is meant to lead to the lordship of Jesus Christ. We must allow diversity in the church, and then God will be glorified. Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians chapter twelve and verse eight.

We have been considering in our last studies some of the basic principles for the exercise of spiritual gifts, mentioned in verses one to seven. We see that the Spirit of God seeks to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, verse three, and manifest these gifts in a diversity through the different members and ministries in the church, and God produces different effects, verse six, through the exercise of these gifts, but ultimately leading to the same unity that is found in the Trinity, mentioned in verses four, five and six. We also saw in verse seven that every believer can exercise some gift, some manifestation of the Spirit through him, ultimately for the good of all.

Now the gifts themselves, the nine gifts mentioned here in 1 Corinthians 12, are first of all the word of wisdom. To one is given the word of wisdom. Wisdom is something that is of value in a difficult situation.

A practical word. It is not a theoretical word. It is a practical word that is like a key to open a difficult door in a particular problem, and very often when people are in problems and difficulties, we need the word of wisdom to be able to give the answer that brings the solution to that problem.

It can also be a word that God gives in order to confound our adversaries. Jesus said, I will give you a mouth and a wisdom. He said in Luke chapter 21, which all your adversaries will not be able to resist or refute.

Luke 21, 15. You remember the instance where people came to Jesus and asked him whether it was right to give tribute to Caesar or not, and Jesus said, after looking at a coin, give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's. That is an example of a word of wisdom to confound our adversaries.

We read in the Old Testament of how Elijah asked the widow who was in debt to get a jar of oil, to get her jar of oil and borrow vessels, and pour out that jar of oil into all those vessels. That was a word of wisdom by which she found a solution to her difficulty, and this is a supernatural ability that God gives to us if we have a desire to help others out of their difficulties. God has to see that we have a burden and a concern for others who are in difficulties.

And then he gives this gift. Another word is the word of knowledge. It says here in verse 8, a second gift which the Holy Spirit gives, the word of knowledge.

Now this is supernatural knowledge, not knowledge that can be acquired by intellectual study. We can study the Bible like we study physics and chemistry. It is not referring to that knowledge because we don't need the Holy Spirit for that.

No, this is supernatural knowledge. It can cover knowledge in many areas. It can cover revelation on God's word through the Holy Spirit on passages that we have no understanding about unaided by the Holy Spirit.

It says Jesus opened the minds of his disciples so that they could understand the things that were written in the law and the prophets concerning Jesus. And so this word of God gives knowledge even today. It can also relate to knowledge relating to certain facts about others that will open up their heart to the gospel.

For example, we read in John chapter 1 that Jesus spoke to Nathanael saying, When you were under the fig tree, I saw you there. And that was the one word that opened up Nathanael's heart to the gospel. Remember that all these gifts are not for a display of our own ability or to show off what God has gifted us with but to lead to the lordship of Christ.

So the word of knowledge is again something that opens people's hearts to the gospel. And third, faith by the same spirit. This is not faith for salvation or faith for victory over sin which comes through revelation on God's word as we read it.

Faith comes through hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. But this is supernatural faith like for example Jesus exercised when he stilled the storm on the sea of Galilee. Supernatural faith for a particular situation to remove a mountain that's hindering God's work that's standing in our way.

To get it out of the way so that God's work can go on. And how many times we find ourselves in need of the supernatural faith so that we don't just sit back complacently when there's a mountain standing in our way but speak to it to get out in the name of Jesus and see it flattened so that we can move forward for the glory of God. And that is a third gift.

A fourth one mentioned here is the gifts of healing, verse 9, by the one spirit. This is very plain and evident. This is the one gift about which it is mentioned in the plural.

Gifts which means there are various types of healing. There may be some to whom God gives faith up to a limited extent to heal the sick. To others, faith to a greater extent.

We are told in James 5 that even the elders can lay hands on the sick anointing them with oil and pray for them in faith in the name of the Lord. Then there are those who are gifted with gifts of healing. Varieties of gifts of healing in the church and this is similar to the ministry Jesus exercised of healing the sick with fever or various other sicknesses.

He raised them up and they were healed. And then another gift mentioned here is the affecting of miracles. Now there is a difference between miracles and healings in the sense that miracle is something greater.

The raising of the dead would be a miracle. The healing of a blind eye would be a miracle. That was not a disease.

There is a person born blind and it's a creation of a non-existent eye in that blind man and that is a miracle that Jesus exercised. And it says here that these are gifts that the spirit gives even in the church. Because the church is called the body of Christ and therefore it has to fulfill the same function that that first physical body of Christ fulfilled when it was on earth for 33 and a half years.

And Jesus continues through the church to do what he did in his physical body when he was on earth. This is why it's good to see these gifts in relation to Jesus' own ministry when he was on earth. How he healed the sick and how he did miracles opened blind eyes and even raised the dead.

To another prophecy. Now we've seen certain gifts of supernatural power, faith, healing and miracles. Now here is a spoken gift.

The gift of prophecy. And in 1 Corinthians 14 he says, interestingly enough, that this is the greatest gift. The greatest gift is not the gift of doing miracles but the gift of prophecy.

To speak forth the word of God according to the need of a person. It is not just Bible teaching. A prophet is different from a teacher.

We'll come to that later in our study of 1 Corinthians 12, but the gift of prophecy is to speak forth God's word in a way that challenges, rebukes, corrects, encourages, builds up, consoles, strengthens, encourages a person. And according to the need of the particular person or the need of the group of people to whom the person is ministering God's word. This is the gift of prophecy.

To another, the distinguishing of spirits. Verse 10. And this is a great need in the church because while we are exercising spiritual gifts we can have so many counterfeits coming up.

The devil seeking to deceive by bringing in counterfeit gifts and therefore there is a need particularly among those who are in leadership to recognize which spirit is operating. Now this is not by intuition by human intuition or discernment but by supernatural revelation where God shows through the Holy Spirit that that, though it looks so genuine, is a counterfeit. And there's a great need for this gift wherever spiritual gifts are exercised if we want to avoid confusion.

To discern and distinguish between spirits. It's not discernment of a person's spiritual condition. No.

It's the distinguishing of which spirit is operating in the exercise of a particular gift. And then eighth to another various kinds of tongues. This is also a gift that God has placed in the church.

Speaking in a language that a person has not learned through his spirit, he exercises this gift and when it comes to chapter 14 we will see more clearly why this gift is given in the church and the companion gift of this is the interpretation of tongues. That when a person speaks in a tongue no one understands him and therefore he can only exercise it in private between him and God unless it has the companion gift of the gift of interpretation of tongues. This is one gift that cannot be exercised by itself in the church apart from the twin gift of interpretation.

Now this is a supernaturally learned language. It's not something that is learned through hard effort and struggle through many years but something that God gives as an ability to express the burden of a person's spirit. And sometimes when our intellects are tired and weighed down and unable to communicate with God, we can't hear God clearly what he's seeking to speak to the church.

Very often he speaks through a tongue, a language spoken through a person and then another interpreting that and thus God's mind, the word of God for that situation can be revealed to a particular church. So these are the nine gifts. Now we find that in all these gifts the purpose is that the church might be edified.

One and the same spirit, verse 11 works all these things. It's the one Holy Spirit distributing to each one as he wills. In other words, we cannot choose which gift we should have.

The Holy Spirit sovereignly chooses which of these gifts we must have and if we seek him he will give us that which is best for us and for the church. Let's turn today to 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12. In our last study we were considering the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in verses 8 to 10 and how the same spirit works all these things distributing, verse 11 to each one individually as he wills.

Those last three words are very important. As he wills. Not as we choose.

The fruit of the spirit are completely required by every one of us. All nine each of us need. But when it comes to the gifts, we cannot choose.

The spirit of God gives that which he sees we need for the ministry to which Jesus has called us in the church. There are two important distinctions concerning the fruit and the gifts that we need to bear in mind in this connection. One is what I just mentioned that all nine of the fruits of the spirit are for us.

But among the gifts of the spirit we may have one or more according to the Holy Spirit's choice. The second difference is that the fruit of the spirit is for the building up of our own character. Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, etc.

are my own character. It is I who am enriched through them. But the gifts are mainly meant for ministry to others.

It's others who are blessed when someone has the word of wisdom or the word of knowledge or the gift of miracles or healings or distinguishing of spirits or tongues with interpretation or supernatural faith, etc. It's for the church, not just for oneself. And then it says in verse 12, even as the body is one.

Notice that almost the only chapter in the entire New Testament which speaks extensively of the church and compares it to a human body is 1 Corinthians 12 and it is in the context of the gifts of the spirit. And it's very interesting to see that. We need to see very clearly that these verses relating the gifts of the spirit in verses 8 to 10 are sort of sandwiched between an introductory passage in verses 1 to 7 and a description of the functioning of the human body in verses 12 onwards.

Now if only we could place the gifts of the spirit in the place where the New Testament has placed it between these two important truths. The truths mentioned in verses 1 to 7 which you have already considered and the truths mentioned in verses 12 following. Then there would be no room for abuse.

All abuse has come because of taking scripture out of its context taking verses 8 to 10 all by themselves and studying them quite apart from the rest of the chapter. And this is exactly what the devil wants us to do. But when we go verse by verse through scripture as we are doing, we find that we get the balance.

And then we cannot go astray for scripture has been written by the Holy Spirit with a beautiful balance in it. And so he speaks about the body when he says it's the one and the same spirit, verse 11, that works in everyone distributing to each individual the best and the clearest example that Paul can use and the Holy Spirit can use is the human body. He says the body is one.

And the church is the body of Christ. There is only one head, Jesus Christ, just like the human body has only one head and this is why it's wrong for any Christian leader to take the place of a head over others. Jesus Christ alone is the head of every single believer in the body of Christ.

Even as the body is one and yet has many members. And when we look at our human body, every one of us can understand that. And all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body.

That's also clear that we have different functions in this body, yet it is only one body. So also, he says, verse 12 he doesn't say so also is the church, but so also is Christ. So also is the Christ. In other words, the church is called the Christ here, in verse 12.

It's the only place in the entire New Testament where the church is called the Christ. Christ means the anointed one. And the church is called the anointed one here.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit which was on Jesus, when he was on earth, is now on the church. And therefore we see that the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit, as we mentioned in an earlier study, is to fulfill the ministry of Christ today in exactly the same way as it was fulfilled in his physical body when he was on earth. The church is the body of Christ, is to carry on the ministry that Jesus fulfilled when he was on earth, as the anointed one in his physical body.

And that's why it's called here the Christ. And then it says in verse 13, for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. Here it speaks about being baptized into one body.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit, verse 13, is what brings us the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Jesus received the gifts of the Spirit only when he was anointed. As far as we know, up to the age of 30, he never preached a sermon, never did a miracle, never healed a sick.

But as soon as he was anointed, he went out into a supernatural ministry. We find it's exactly the same today. Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, people enter the supernatural dimension of the Holy Spirit.

And that's why this is the only place in the entire New Testament where we read of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Epistles. The only other places are in the Gospels and in the Acts where John the Baptist and Jesus spoke about it. But in all the Epistles, the only place where it speaks about the baptism in the Holy Spirit is here in 1 Corinthians 12, 13, where it says in one Spirit we are all baptized.

That is the marginal rendering of verse 13. In one Spirit we are all baptized. And so we see that we are baptized in one Spirit.

He's referring to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. And we can ask, does this mean that every believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit? It is true that every believer in Corinth was baptized in the Holy Spirit because in the days of the Apostles, they ensured that every believer came into the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They did not leave a believer unbaptized in water or unbaptized in the Holy Spirit.

They led them into water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit immediately after their conversion. And so they could speak about that. Paul could just as well say to the Corinthians, we are all baptized in water, and it would have been true because he did lead them all into water baptism after their conversion.

And we see here also he could say about them, we are all baptized in one Spirit. And he's speaking here about the fact that all this baptism in the Spirit was to bring us into one body. To help us to fulfill our function in one body.

Not as separate individuals or separate groups. This is the tragedy in Christendom where people are split up into so many different groups because they have different ministries. An evangelist was never meant to set up a private evangelistic organization apart from the body of Christ.

No teaching ministry, no prophetic ministry, no healing ministry was ever meant by God to function apart from the body of Christ. Personality differences, cultural differences, racial differences, Spaxian, Westphalian, Jews and Greeks. Slaves are free.

Social distinctions. We're all made to drink of one Spirit. So how can we be different? In our presentation of the message of Christ to the world, we are to be one.

Even though there's a variety of gifts. For the body is not one member but many. He says, are you an evangelist? Do you have a particular gift God has given to you? Well, you can't exercise that to the exclusion of everything else.

You must fulfill your function and leave room to the others. Do you have a healing gift? You have to fulfill your gift and leave room for other ministries. Likewise with tongues, prophecy, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, everything.

No one gift is more important than the other. The body is not one member but many. Many members.

If the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, now it is true that certain ministries have a more important function. Later on he speaks about prophecy as being one which has the most important function in the church. But that doesn't mean that the others should be despised.

No. If the foot, for example, should say, because I'm not a hand, I'm not a part of the body, it's not for this reason any the lesser part of the body. A foot can have an inferiority complex because it's down at the bottom and some believers tend to have that, an inferiority complex feeling that their gift is not as outstanding as somebody else's.

And their attitude can be, I'm not a hand. I don't have the gift that person has. Does it mean you don't have a function in the body? You certainly have.

And the ear in the same way can have an inferiority complex in relation to the eye. Saying, I'm not an eye. Therefore I'm not a part of the body.

No. Is it for this reason any the lesser part of the body? No. Every member is needed.

If the whole body were an eye, for example, supposing we had only the outstanding ministries. The whole body were an eye. What about the hearing then? That's also a needed ministry.

And if the whole were a hearing, where would the sense of smell be? And so we see we need hearing, we need smelling, and we need seeing in the body, tasting in exactly the same way in the body of Christ too. We need all the gifts in order to be able to function as a body. And it says in verse 18, now God has placed the members each one of them in the body just as he desired.

If they were all one member, where would the body be? Now there are many members but one body. This is so simple as to need no explanation at all. It's so clear when it comes to the human body.

Now the opposite of an inferiority complex is a superiority complex where the eye says to the hand, verse 21, I have no need of you. That is impossible. The eye never says that to the hand in the body.

And even the head does not say to the feet, I have no need of you. And when we realize that the head is Christ, and he does not say to the lowest member in the body, I have no need of you, we see there is absolutely no place in the church for feelings of superiority over others. Just like there is no need for anyone to feel inferior because his gift is not so spectacular.

One who has a more spectacular gift cannot fulfill God's purpose in the exercise of that gift if he has a superior attitude towards other members in the body of Christ.

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