

## A Lesson On The Spiritual Gifts Of The Christian..

Text: 1 Cor 12:1-11

1) He explains the nature of these gifts.

Suggested Hymns:

2) He calls attention to the right use of these gifts.

337, 172, 447, 284, 239

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, *<sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: <sup>2</sup> You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. <sup>3</sup> Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*

*<sup>4</sup> There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.*

*<sup>7</sup> But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: <sup>8</sup> for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.*

*<sup>11</sup> But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

*“I will bless you ... And you shall be a blessing.”<sup>1</sup>* This is what God spoke to Abraham after instructing him to leave the idolatrous surroundings of Haran.

True to His promise, God blessed Abraham in a most bountiful manner. Abraham was richly blessed with temporal goods. But the greatest blessing of all

was the promise that out of his family, his descendants, the Saviour of the world was to be born.

And Abraham proved himself a blessing to his fellow-men. He was a blessing to the members of his household. The Lord said in Genesis 18:19, <sup>19</sup> *“For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice.* Wherever Abraham pitched his tent, he *“called on the name of the Lord,”*<sup>2</sup> and inaugurated the worship of the true God by preaching and prayer.

The words spoken to Abraham apply to every Christian. We all have received gifts, which are blessings from God. He has blessed us with temporal gifts and, above all else, with spiritual gifts. And being richly blessed of God, we are to be a blessing to others.

This is the truth which the apostle is driving home with particular force in today’s Epistle-lesson. There was need of St. Paul’s addressing the congregation at Corinth on this particular subject. As a faithful steward, aware of the responsibility of his office, he writes to them, <sup>1</sup> *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant.*

There were certain matters that could wait until Paul would come to Corinth. But the things of which he speaks in our text called for immediate attention. Let us consider a lesson on the spiritual gifts of the Christian. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. He Explains The Nature Of These Gifts.**

The nature of the spiritual gifts. — By way of contrast St. Paul brings home to the Corinthians how richly they have been blessed by God with spiritual gifts.

He reminds them of their former sad state, when they were ignorant of the Gospel. They worshiped idols, the work of man’s hands, of whom the psalmist declares in Psalm 135:16-17, <sup>16</sup> *They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see;* <sup>17</sup> *They have ears, but they do not hear; Nor is there any breath in their mouths.*

There was no answer when the prophets of Baal tortured themselves and cried to their God. Being blind in spiritual things, natural man readily follows blind leaders.

But through the preaching of the Gospel a wonderful change had been wrought in Corinth. As Abraham was led out of idolatrous surroundings by the call of God, so were the Christians at Corinth led out of their idolatrous and superstitious practises by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit through the Gospel had kindled faith in their hearts.

No one standing in the true faith will call Jesus accursed. Luther points out very correctly that it is not only Jews and Gentiles who blaspheme the Lord Jesus, but any one who teaches that salvation is not by faith alone, but also by works is guilty of blasphemy.

In order that the name of the Lord Jesus might be praised, there had been given to the Corinthians a great diversity of gifts. The nature of these gifts in which this Christian congregation was, were rich indeed.

*To one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit.* Such a person has profound knowledge of the truth and is able to explain difficult passages of Scripture to those who do not understand.

*To another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit.* Such a Christian has the gift of applying the Word of God to individual cases in life. Wisdom is the more theoretical, but knowledge the more practical.

Our text continues listing another group of spiritual gifts. *<sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles.*

Faith here refers to a specially large measure of strong faith, that firm, heroic trust in God's power which is able to accomplish the seemingly impossible. Abraham, Moses, Paul, had this gift of heroic faith.

To another was given the power to cure diseases. In the name of Jesus, apostles as well as laymen wrought mighty miracles. The lame man at the Temple gate was healed. The raising of Tabitha<sup>3</sup> and Eutychus.<sup>4</sup> The judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira is another example.<sup>5</sup>

A third group of spiritual gifts is mentioned. *To another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.* Prophecy, the discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues and the faculty of interpreting these tongues.

That the gift of prophecy and other remarkable manifestations of the Holy Spirit would be in evidence at the beginning of the New Testament era was clearly foretold by the prophet Joel, as we read in Joel 2:28, <sup>28</sup> *“And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.*

Peter cites this prophecy in explaining the great miracle of Pentecost. The gift of prophecy, however, does not only refer to the prediction of future events, but it includes also the faculty of expounding the Scriptures correctly.

Another most valuable gift of the Holy Spirit is the power of discerning the spirits, the ability readily to expose false prophets, no matter how cleverly they tried to cover up their false doctrines.

To another were given the ability to speak various kinds of languages. As on the day of Pentecost the ability of speaking the great truths of God’s Word in languages never learned before was given to the apostles, thus also other Christians were able to speak at once in foreign languages.

Truly, the congregation at Corinth had been blessed with an array of wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit. It has pleased God to withdraw in the course of time some of these extraordinary gifts. They are certainly not given as commonly as they were in the days of the apostles. The gift of different tongues has disappeared entirely.

But in addition to the gift of heroic faith as we see it manifested in the life of Luther, and others, there are with us, as Luther says, those precious gifts which are necessary for the edifying of the Church. God gives to His Church today men endowed with wisdom, men who have the special faculty of setting forth the various doctrines of Scripture in an understandable way.

There are others who have the gift of prophecy, the ability of interpreting the Scriptures correctly in a marked degree. Other men have the ability of detecting error, even though it may appear in an ever so innocent a form. Truly, we also have been richly blessed with spiritual gifts.

Indeed every Christian has a measure of such gifts. We are to pray for them<sup>6</sup>. Therefore let us be a blessing to others. Do you want to learn how to do this? St. Paul teaches us how we are to use the spiritual gifts properly.

## 2. He Calls Attention To The Right Use Of These Gifts.

The fact that spiritual gifts are also administrations is to remind us that we are to use our God-given talents in serving our fellow-men. And no Christian can claim exemption from such service; for we read: *“the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.”*

Every Christian has received some gift of grace, and as a faithful steward he is not to put this particular gift or talent under the bushel, but is to use it in the service of God and his fellow-men. Nor would it be pleasing to God if a Christian would boast because of having received some particular spiritual gift.

St. Paul’s letter implies that certain members of the congregation at Corinth who were endowed with outstanding gifts more than others despised those who had not received the same gifts, thereby causing bitterness and strife.

The very nature of these spiritual gifts, for instance, the gift of Bible interpretation, shows that they were given for the benefit of others. Strictly speaking, these gifts do not belong to the individual, but to the Church. They are given for the edifying of Christ’s body. The whole Church is to derive blessings from them.

When the congregation at Jerusalem prepared to elect a number of men for a special office, it chose men who were especially qualified to serve as helpers.<sup>7</sup>

We read in Acts 6:1-7, *<sup>1</sup> Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.*

*<sup>2</sup> Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. <sup>3</sup> “Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; <sup>4</sup> “but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*

*<sup>5</sup> And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, <sup>6</sup> whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. <sup>7</sup> Then the word*

*of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

Another example of someone helping is in Romans 16:1-2, <sup>1</sup> *I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea,* <sup>2</sup> *that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.* Everybody's help is necessary and appreciated in the Church.

People can help in many ways. We read in 2 Timothy 1:16-18, <sup>16</sup> *The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain;* <sup>17</sup> *but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me.* <sup>18</sup> *The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day -- and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.*

This principle, that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is given to every man for the profit of all, must decide the question when a congregation is asked to release its pastor to serve in a different field, to fill perhaps a position at a seminary for instance.

And when in conclusion St. Paul again states that the Holy Spirit gives to every person as He will, he reminds us that all we are, and all we have, as Christians we owe to the Triune God.

In true humility, then, let us use our spiritual gifts in the service of the Church and thus be a blessing to others. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12:2

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 12:8

<sup>3</sup> Acts 9:36-41

<sup>4</sup> Acts 20:9-12

<sup>5</sup> Acts 5:1-11

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:31

<sup>7</sup> Acts 6:1-7; cf. also Rom. 16:1-6; 2 Tim. 1:16-17