



1 Corinthians (2013) - Lesson 12B

Chapter 12:4-11

P.O. Box 702107
San Antonio, Texas, 78270
210.319.5055

©2014. Verse By Verse Ministry International.
All rights reserved

versebyverseministry.org/lessons/1corinthians-2013-lesson-12b

- Our foundation for the study of spiritual gifts has been set
 - Paul laid that foundation last week in the first seven verses of Chapter 12
 - Our life of faith in the truth begins with, and is guided by, the Spirit of God
 - And that same Spirit is at work in us to grant us spiritual gifts
 - Furthermore, the body will be equipped with a variety of gifts for a variety of intended ministries
 - This variety is intended for the common good of the body
 - Each gift plays a role in the symphony of spiritual work the Lord intends to accomplish in a body of believers
 - But no matter how different one gift may be from another, we can be assured they all originate from the same Spirit
 - No one in the body of Christ receives more or less of God's Spirit
 - He is indivisible and ever-present in us
 - So the question isn't, do we have the fullness of the Spirit?
 - The question is, what are we doing with what we've already been given?
- Now moving forward, Paul jumps into an explanation of how these gifts are to be experienced and shared within the body
 - Let's back up a few verses from last time...

1Cor. 12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

1Cor. 12:5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

1Cor. 12:6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

1Cor. 12:7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1Cor. 12:8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

1Cor. 12:9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

1Cor. 12:10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

1Cor. 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

- As Paul explained, we should expect to find a variety of gifts within the body of Christ, all originating in the same Spirit
 - This is a key point running through the entire discussion of spiritual gifts
 - The fact that you possess a different spiritual gift from me is never proof that you have a different measure of the Spirit
 - Our different experiences in the Spirit are planned and purposeful on God's

part

- I need not feel less a Christian or that God is less pleased with me simply because I don't have your spiritual gift
- Neither should you feel cheated because the Lord didn't give you the gift I received
- In v.7 Paul explains that whatever we have been given is necessary to assure the common good
 - God knows what He's doing
 - He knew who would gather in this church body on a certain day, and He knew what gifts we would need
 - So He equips every body as needed to ensure the common good
 - Sometimes that equipping comes from within and sometimes it comes from outside the body (i.e., a visiting teacher or internet ministry)
- Then in vs.8-10 Paul lists nine gifts in the body, so let's consider each one in turn
 - First, there is the gift of wisdom
 - Wisdom is the ability to come to a spiritually mature perspective on current circumstances
 - That perspective can then be offered to a leader or group in the church
 - Secondly, there is the gift of knowledge
 - This refers to a true understanding of God-revealed mysteries
 - Knowledge is different than wisdom in terms of time and scope
 - Wisdom is God-given maturity and insight about how we approach the world and our circumstances
 - While knowledge is God-given insight about how we understand God and His mysteries and purposes
 - Joseph and Solomon demonstrated wisdom; Moses and David demonstrated knowledge
 - In both cases, these gifts find their purposes in enlightening and educating God's people
 - Third, faith is a spiritual gift
 - We know faith is a gift for every Christian in the sense of salvation
 - But the spiritual gift of faith refers to a supernatural trust in God coupled with a courage to act on that trust
 - We could say that Daniel's three friends displayed the gift of faith in their willingness to enter the fire
 - Or that Abraham demonstrated a gift of faith in his willingness to sacrifice his only son
- Fourth is healing, meaning a supernatural power to end illness in the body instantly
 - Progressive healing over time is not a manifestation of this gift
 - If I lay hands on someone and they get better over a period of weeks, how can we say that was a manifestation of God's power?

- It could just as easily be explained as the natural work of the body's immune system
- I'm not suggesting that God isn't working in natural ways to heal us
 - I simply want to make clear that the gift of healing – like all spiritual gifts – stands apart from similar, natural forms
 - A spiritual gift is, by definition, a manifestation of God's power in a supernatural way
 - So the gift of healing will always be immediately recognizable as a work of the Spirit
- Interestingly, Paul describes this particular gift is in the plural in Greek (e.g., gifts of healings)
 - This tells us that Paul means there are many types of healing gifts, not just a single healing gift
 - So not everyone with a gift of healing can heal every ailment
- Some Christians debate whether this gift still exists in the church today
 - Certainly we see many examples of supernatural healing in the early church in Acts, but what about today?
 - There is nothing in scripture to suggest that this gift ended at any point in the church's history
- And it's hard to say how common it truly is today, compared to in the time of the early church
 - The Bible records notable moments in church history, but we have no way of knowing how prevalent these examples were in those days
 - Were people healed supernaturally on a regular basis or was it as rare as it seems to be today? We can't know
 - It is impossible to determine how common genuine healing may be in the church today
 - God may be healing many people supernaturally around the world, even if we never hear about it
 - Even though we know many frauds and liars are working to deceive believers with false displays of healing
- Next, miracles are mighty works of God that alter the normal course of natural events
 - The term miracle is often used to describe any supernatural work of God
 - And it's even used at times to describe natural occurrences, like childbirth or when I volunteer to do the dishes at home
 - But once again, the spiritual gift is of miracles is something specific and recognizable as a unique work of God
 - Elijah had the ability to work miracles
 - Moses had the ability to work miracles
 - Paul had the ability to work miracles
 - And once again, the ability to alter natural events is something given for the

benefit of the body of Christ

- Can believers possess this gift today?
 - Once more, there is nothing in the Bible to suggest the gift has expired
 - But it's also clear that it was never common and is always associated with important moments in God's plan
 - Miracles are not common by definition, so it should not surprise us if the Spirit rarely hands out the gift of miracles in the body
 - But there is a difference between rarely and never, and we can't say it never happens today
- Prophecy is a gift of supernatural utterances
 - The word "prophecy" has a variety of meanings in scripture
 - First, a prophet is someone who is called to reveal details of God's future plan for the world and His people
 - Like Isaiah or Daniel
 - But a prophet can also refer to someone who explains the spiritual meaning of past or present-day events
 - Like the address spoken by the first martyr, Stephen, in Acts 7
 - Thirdly, in the Old Testament, a prophet can be a person who sings prophetic praises as a spontaneous expression of thanks to God
 - As Mary sang her song after the appearance of the angel
 - Or when Moses and Miriam both sang songs after crossing the Red Sea
 - Finally, a prophetic word can be an instruction from God delivered to edify or instruct the church
 - Just as Agabus came from Jerusalem to Antioch in Acts 11 to inform the church of a coming famine so they could prepare
- Seeing the diversity of the prophecy gifts, we might naturally ask which of these four kinds of prophecy still continue in the Church today?
 - The answer is found in scripture itself
 - Both the writer of Hebrews in Chapter 1 and the Apostle John at the end of Revelation make clear that the canon of scripture is now forever closed
 - God Himself has declared that He has finished revealing the details of coming events
 - We have all the prophecy we're going to get
 - First, because God's revelation culminated in the revealing of His Son Jesus Christ
 - Secondly, because the canon was closed with the death of the last apostle, who were Christ's appointed representatives to write the canon
 - Finally, there is no need for new prophecy to explain the spiritual meaning of past events since Christ is the fulfillment of all past prophecy
 - Therefore, the first, second and third types of prophecy ended with the death of John

- But here we find Paul was still talking about these forms of prophecy working in the church in his day
- Obviously the apostles were still alive and working in Paul's day, so he had reason to mention it then
- Today, however, new prophecy of the first three kinds is no longer possible, since the Spirit will not act to contradict the word of God
 - So should someone offer you a new revelation concerning future events in God's plan, they are a false prophet
 - L. Ron Hubbard was a fraud when he offered new prophecy of coming events in forming Scientology
 - Or if someone should suggest a new interpretation of past events, we can know they are a fraud according to scripture
 - Joseph Smith was a fraud when he offered a new interpretation of past events in forming the Mormon church
- That leaves the prophetic word of instruction to the church
 - There is nothing in scripture to suggest that the prophetic word of prophecy has ended
 - We might expect that God will gift someone with these abilities from time to time
 - But as with all other gifts, the manifestation of this gift must be self-evidently a work of the Spirit
 - If someone claims to have a prophetic word as an instruction for us from the Lord, we should test this utterance carefully before placing any trust in the person's assertions
 - As Paul has said, the same Spirit is working in all gifts
 - So if the Spirit is truly giving us a word through another member of the church, then we should expect that same Spirit in us to confirm that word some other way
 - Without that confirmation, we should reject the word supposedly coming from the Lord
 - This is why the Jews were commanded to stone any person who claimed to be a prophet but made mistaken prophecies
 - If a person is truly speaking with the power of the Spirit, as they claim to do, then they won't make mistakes
 - Anyone can guess about a future event or offer advice to a person and get lucky once in a while
 - But God's predictions and God's instructions will never be wrong
- Distinguishing spirits, or discernment, is the counterweight to the gift of prophecy
 - It is the ability to know whether a prophetic word is coming from the Spirit of God or the Spirit of the antichrist, that is Satan
 - This gift acts with prophecy much like the gift of interpreting tongues works with speaking in tongues

- If someone claims to speak with prophecy, it may be difficult to know if a specific prophetic word is accurate
 - If a false prophet is speaking, they can skillfully word their prophecy to sound spiritual and weighty yet have no substance or accuracy
 - Much like the way horoscopes sound meaningful, but in reality they are vague and offer no real insight about the future
- So this gift resides in the body to help the church filter out the enemy's work from that of the Spirit
 - Keep in mind, we all have a degree of spiritual discernment simply by the presence of the Spirit in each of us
 - So this gift goes beyond a normal level of discernment
 - A person with this gift can call out a false prophet before anyone else may have detected the fraud
- Finally, we have the gifts of tongues and interpreting tongues
 - Paul spends an extended period of time teaching on this one gift in Chapter 14, so we're going to hold off discussing it in detail until then
 - For now we can simply define it and its complement
 - In the Greek, the word "tongues" is *glossa*, which is the word for a foreign language
 - If you know how to speak a foreign language, then you know how to speak a tongue, to use the Greek word
 - Likewise, interpreting a tongue means understanding a foreign language when someone is speaking it to you
 - You may have grown up as a native English speaker, but because you took Spanish classes in school, you can understand Spanish when you hear it spoken
 - In the sense of the Greek word, you can be said to interpret the tongue of Spanish
 - We will wait until Chapter 14 to understand how and why this gift is given in the body of Christ
 - For now we should note that in all the references to gifts made in 1 Corinthians 12-14, the one spiritual gift Paul always includes in every list is the gift of tongues
 - When we get to Chapter 14, we'll find out why Paul places this gift at the center of his discourse on spiritual gifts
- Speaking of lists of gifts, this list in vs.8-10 is but one of three several such lists found in the New Testament
 - Paul gives similar lists elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, again in Romans 12 and also in Ephesians 4
 - In each place Paul lists spiritual gifts, he includes a slightly different group
 - In fact, on at least three different occasions in 1 Corinthians alone, Paul lists spiritual gifts differently

- In this list in vs.8-10, Paul mentions nine different spiritual gifts
 - Word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing spirits (discernment), tongues, interpretation of tongues
 - If we compare this to the list in Romans, we see a few similarities but also differences
 - In Romans, it's prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy
 - And if we look at Ephesians, we find still another list
 - There it is apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers
- How do we reconcile the differences among these lists?
 - Are they merely additive?
 - Do we just lump them all together and call it a day?
- If we do that, we are at risk of committing an exegetical error
 - Because to lump these together ignores the context in which each list was given
 - In other words, we need to ask did Paul himself intend for these three lists written in different decades to three different audiences to be joined into a single list of spiritual gifts?
 - And if so, why did he repeat a few gifts across all three lists?
 - Perhaps he had other purposes in these lists?
- Let's step back and look at these lists in their context
 - First, looking at the list in Ephesians
 - This list is clearly different than the other two
 - The Ephesians list is not a list of gifts at all; it's a list of positions or roles in the church
 - Apostle, teacher, pastor, evangelist, prophet
 - These roles are closely associated with gifts, but they are not gifts in and of themselves
 - Someone can be an evangelist without having the gift of evangelism
 - Then if we look at the context of Ephesians 4, we see Paul is talking about the role-players God raises up to equip the body for service
 - So in Ephesians 4, Paul isn't talking about spiritual gifts at all
 - So we can't add this list to any other
 - Then moving to Romans, Paul's topic in Romans 12 is how the church should regard one another in the body of Christ
 - Paul is teaching that we should not think too highly of ourselves, since we all have a part to play in the body of Christ
 - In that context, Paul mentions some spiritual gifts as examples of the ways a member of the body can be of service to others in the body
 - In each example, Paul prefaces the mention of a spiritual gift with the preposition

“if”

- If you have a gift of teaching, then teach...Paul says
- If you have a gift of service, then get busy serving, etc.
- It's obvious in Romans 12 that Paul's purpose in listing spiritual gifts wasn't to provide an exhaustive list of gifts
 - He was just offering a few examples to make his point
- His point being that everyone should be serving in some kind of gift in humility and without haughtiness
- So now back to 1 Corinthians, we can recognize Paul's pattern
 - He often lists spiritual gifts as examples to make a larger point in specific context
 - What is Paul's context for giving this list in 1 Corinthians 12?
 - His point is that a diverse number of gifts are a blessing to the body, yet all gifts originate from the same Spirit
 - And once again to illustrate his point, Paul lists a few representative gifts
 - The things Paul chooses to include in this list reinforce the diversity of gifts available from the Spirit for the common good
 - For example, a church might have one believer who is martyred in a courageous act of faith
 - While at the same time another believer is being rescued from martyrdom by the working of a miracle
 - One believer is edifying physical bodies through a gift of healing
 - While another believer is edifying minds with a gift of wisdom or knowledge
 - One may be speaking in a foreign language while another interprets that language, etc.
 - So as we look across all the lists of spiritual gifts given in scripture, it's clear Paul never intended to present us with an authoritative inventory of all possible spiritual gifts
 - Paul's various lists are always a little different because each list was merely a representative sample of spiritual gifts
 - Even if we were to add them all together, we still have no reason to think we arrive at an exhaustive list of spiritual gifts
 - In fact, it makes sense to conclude that Paul didn't give us a complete list because he *couldn't* list all the gifts
- Therefore, to the question of how many spiritual gifts are there in the body, the answer from scripture is we don't know
 - While we know of some gifts, because they are listed in one place or another, we can't be sure we know all of them
 - Can someone possess a gift of worship, or a gift of hospitality, or a gift of prayer?
 - None of these are called out in scripture, but that doesn't mean they don't

exist

- The real question is whether an ability in the body glorifies God in the way it sets itself apart from the common giftings of individuals, and provides for the good of the body
- If it meets this test, we might be looking at a spiritual gift
- Each person is to be certain in their own heart what God has called and gifted you to do, and then you should work in that gift
- Let's not waste more time debating what is or isn't a gift or trying to equate one gift to another
 - None of these lists of spiritual gifts are intended to be comprehensive
 - So neither should we get too dogmatic in arguing what is or isn't a spiritual gift
 - In the end it's not the form a gift takes that matters, but the way it glorifies the Lord and edifies the body that counts
 - When God moves in a person's life to gift them supernaturally, we see that work as coming from God and we give God glory for it
- Next time we'll pick up again in v.11 as we continue in our study of gifts