

## Lesson 10      6 April 2014

### Spiritual Gifts in the Church

**Lesson Scope:** 1 Corinthians 12 and 14

#### Lesson Focus

After giving corrective admonition regarding the observance of Communion, Paul went on to address the Corinthians' imbalanced exercise of spiritual gifts. Some felt that their spiritual gifts made them independent of the rest of the body. Others were made to feel that the church did not need their gifts. In this atmosphere of competition, the gifts of some members were exalted, while the gifts of others were degraded.

They focused their attention on the individual members and their gifts, rather than on the Giver of the gifts. They forgot the purpose for which the gifts were given and misused them for selfish advantage. They paid special attention to spectacular displays and overlooked the fact that spiritual gifts are given for edification.

The modern charismatic movement has brought increased attention to spiritual gifts, especially the miraculous ones such as speaking in tongues and healing. This lesson should help us to evaluate these trends and to gain a Scriptural understanding regarding the proper use of spiritual gifts.

The church of God is a living body. The Holy Spirit endows the church with gifts and energizes her members.

Familiarize yourself with the content of 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, and use the verses not included in the lesson text to supplement and support the main teachings. Each of the gifts the Spirit gives the church has a purpose and a right use. God has made each person different from all others so that each can fill a place of usefulness in the church.

Just as the members of the physical body function best when all work together and are coordinated, so the church prospers when each member does his part. Use the analogy of the physical body to illustrate the proper function of the members in the church.

Keep in view that we must maintain a balance between our evaluation of the worth and use of our own gifts, and the benefit we can derive from the gifts of others. We can grow spiritually from the contribution

of our fellow brethren when we are humble and in honor prefer our brethren.

**Lesson Aim:** To give instruction concerning the gifts of the Spirit in the body of Christ.

**Theme Verse:** [1 Corinthians 12:18](#). But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

## Lesson Text

### Unity

[1 Corinthians 12:1-14](#) <sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. <sup>2</sup> Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. <sup>3</sup> Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. <sup>4</sup> Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. <sup>7</sup> But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. <sup>8</sup> For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; <sup>9</sup> To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; <sup>10</sup> To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: <sup>11</sup> But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. <sup>12</sup> For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. <sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. <sup>14</sup> For the body is not one member, but many.

### Cooperation

[1 Corinthians 12:18-27](#) <sup>18</sup> But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. <sup>19</sup> And if they were all one member, where *were* the body? <sup>20</sup> But now *are they* many members, yet

but one body. <sup>21</sup> And 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. <sup>22</sup> Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: <sup>23</sup> And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness. <sup>24</sup> For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked: <sup>25</sup> That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another. <sup>26</sup> And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. <sup>27</sup> Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

## Edification

1 Corinthians 14:26-35 <sup>26</sup> How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. <sup>27</sup> If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, *let it be* by two, or at the most *by* three, and *that* by course; and let one interpret. <sup>28</sup> But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. <sup>29</sup> Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. <sup>30</sup> If *any thing* be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. <sup>31</sup> For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. <sup>32</sup> And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. <sup>33</sup> For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. <sup>34</sup> Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. <sup>35</sup> And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

## Questions for Study

### Unity

1. What errors can arise regarding diversities of gifts?
2. For what reasons are various gifts given to different individuals?
3. How can the diversity of spiritual gifts bring about unity?

## **Cooperation**

4. What lessons can we learn from the comparison of the church to a physical body?

5. What happens when one member decides that he and his gifts are not needed?

## **Edification**

6. What principles enable us to enjoy edifying Christian assemblies?

7. How can the admonition that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" be applied in a practical way?

8. How and where should women exercise their spiritual gifts?

## **Analyzing the Passage**

"Diversities of gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:4) are varying endowments given by the Holy Spirit to individuals, enabling them to fulfill their roles in church work. While the gifts and the members are many, the goal is to bring all the members to spiritual maturity and unity in Christ.

The coordination of the members of man's body provides an illustration of how Christ's body, the church, should function. No member is independent of the body; all are interdependent for survival. Each member fills a place that contributes to the benefit of the whole body.

The public assembly brings the members together for mutual edification and instruction. Each one gives something; each receives what others give. This should be done in an orderly manner, so "that all may learn, and all may be comforted" (1 Corinthians 14:31).

Paul built on his previous teaching regarding the headship order (addressed in 1 Corinthians 11:3), showing a practical outworking of this principle. He stated that women are to keep silent in the church. God has appointed man to the role of leadership. Women fill a supportive role, and they exercise their gifts apart from the assembly.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Unity**

1. There is serious potential for wrong concepts regarding spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1). Without an awareness of Christ's purpose for the church, one can easily misunderstand the purpose of spiritual gifts and misuse them for personal benefit. When spiritual gifts are improperly

exercised, they divide rather than unify the body. Pride can easily become the downfall of specially gifted brethren. We should be careful to honor and thank God for giving us these gifts. He is the Giver of "every good gift and every perfect gift" (James 1:17).

2. The Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7). Spiritual gifts are given to individuals so that all may profit. Every member is given some talent to use for the good of the church. These gifts are given through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit as He superintends their distribution for the benefit of the body. Each member must be content with the gifts God has wisely given him.

3. The Spirit manifests His gifts through many individuals (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).

Not all the gifts are concentrated in one person. Each person is given a variety of gifts to enable him to fulfill his purpose in the church. Each person contributes his part for the one purpose God has for the church. When each one shares his gifts with the group, all have the benefit of all the gifts.

4. The individual manifestations of the Spirit are meaningful only in the context of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:12-14). In chapter 14, Paul instructed the Corinthians regarding the right exercise of the gifts in the assembly. About speaking in an unknown tongue for the benefit of others, he directed that what was said be interpreted for the sake of the others (1 Corinthians 14:27-28). To avoid confusion, only one person should speak at a time (1 Corinthians 14:30). Women are not permitted to speak in the public assembly (1 Corinthians 14:34).

The members of our physical body cannot live and function when detached from the rest of the body. This is also true in the church. The gifts are given to individuals, but their exercise is to benefit all.

### **Cooperation**

5. God has sovereignly set the members in the body (1 Corinthians 12:18, 24). Whether in the natural body or in Christ's body, the church, God has ordained the function of each member. Christ, the Head, coordinates the members so that they function together in harmony. When each functions according to the will of Christ, the body functions as He intends.

6. The members of the body are interdependent (1 Corinthians 12:19-

21). When one member of the body is severed from the rest or if it fails to function due to disease, the whole body suffers. For this reason we take care to ensure the health of each member for the good of the body.

7. The Spirit's gifts must be exercised for the support and care of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:24-27). All the members are needed for the body to exist and function. The gifts that the Spirit gives to each member must be used for the nurture of the body. No gift is given without a useful purpose in view.

### **Edification**

8. There is a proper place and time for the exercise of each spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 14:26-28, 33). Godly order and harmony mark the true expression of spiritual gifts. A spiritual person desires to share his inspiring thoughts with the brotherhood, but he does not dominate. He gives others an opportunity to speak. He considers seriously their viewpoints and values their contribution to his understanding.

9. The exercise of spiritual gifts is safe only when members are accountable to the body (1 Corinthians 14:29-32). No one has complete knowledge of every aspect of truth. When one speaks, he should be aware that among those listening may be some whose understanding of the subject is greater than his own. Allowing those persons an opportunity to speak gives the first speaker an opportunity to gain increased knowledge of truth.

10. Christian women are to keep silence in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). God has called men to lead out in public exhortation. Women are to exercise their spiritual gifts apart from the public assembly. Their role in the nurture of children is of great value. Timothy grew up under the godly instruction of his mother and grandmother. The gentle example of a godly woman is priceless.

### **Important Teachings**

1. There is serious potential for wrong concepts regarding spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1).

2. The Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7).

3. The Spirit manifests His gifts through many individuals (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).

4. The individual manifestations of the Spirit are meaningful only in the

context of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

5. God has sovereignly set the members in the body (1 Corinthians 12:18, 24).

6. The members of the body are interdependent (1 Corinthians 12:19-21).

7. The Spirit's gifts must be exercised for the support and care of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:24-27).

8. There is a proper place and time for the exercise of each spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 14:26-28, 33).

9. The exercise of spiritual gifts is safe only when members are accountable to the body (1 Corinthians 14:29-32).

10. Christian women are to keep silence in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. What errors can arise regarding diversities of gifts?

One error is the belief that the gifts are given solely for one's personal benefit. Another is to place great value on some gifts and to consider others unnecessary. Competition in the exercise of gifts causes strife and division.

Some may not understand the purpose of spiritual gifts in public worship services. Whether one is speaking, praying, or singing, the ultimate purpose is to glorify God and to provide spiritual benefits for all others present.

2. For what reasons are various gifts given to different individuals? No one person needs all the gifts to function in his role. The Spirit gives to each the blend of gifts he will need for the work he is called to do. Each can benefit from the contribution of those having the gifts he lacks. Various gifts are needed for various functions in the church. Also there are diverse kinds of people to be reached with the Gospel.

3. How can the diversity of spiritual gifts bring about unity?

Each gift contributes its part for the good of the whole body. When one member of the body does not do its part, the body's function is impaired. When one exercises his gifts to attract attention to self disunity results. When all work together, each contributing as his gifts enable him, unity results. Diversity of gifts is necessary to meet diverse needs, but there is one goal—"the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians

4:12).

4. What lessons can we learn from the comparison of the church to a physical body?

Each member is a useful part of the body. No member can thrive apart from the body. Each member benefits from the contributions of all the other members. The whole body suffers when one member suffers.

5. What happens when one member decides that he and his gifts are not needed?

The church suffers because it lacks his contribution. He feels estranged from the body and likely will eventually sever his connection with it. His lack of zeal for the goals Christ has for the church leads to a failure to see how he can contribute to the good of the church.

6. What principles enable us to enjoy edifying Christian assemblies?

All that is said should be understandable to those in the assembly. Care should be taken to ensure the doctrinal soundness of what is shared. Only one person should speak at a time. One person should not dominate in the assembly. Women are to remain silent.

7. How can the admonition that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" be applied in a practical way?

We should not let an emotional attachment to our own ideas keep us from submitting to the counsel of our brethren. "In honour preferring one another" (Romans 12:10) should be our rule of operation when conflicting ideas clash. No person should consider himself the only one who is right, especially when the consensus of the rest is otherwise. Each should be willing to have his words reviewed and scrutinized by the other brethren.

8. How and where should women exercise their spiritual gifts?

In forbidding women to speak in the church, Paul was not teaching that women should not exercise their spiritual gifts. He was indicating that man is called to the role of leadership in public worship; women function in a supportive position. As keepers at home, they effectively utilize their gifts for the welfare of the church.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

The church functions at its best when each member accepts the place God has for him and fills his role to the glory of God and for the good of the body. A competitive spirit disrupts the work of the church and

distracts from God's purposes.

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil" (Ecclesiastes 5:1).

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

### **Research Guide**

1. Consider the variation of personality and talent among Jesus' twelve disciples. Recall their contention about which of them would be the greatest, and notice Jesus' reply (Matthew 20:20-28).
2. Read the parable of the talents in Luke 19:12-27. Use this account to show your class our accountability to God for the use of our time and talents.