

(1 Corinthians) Overview to Chapter 12

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the biblical balance of the Holy Spirit's ministry and the gifts of the Spirit, and how they relate to the unity and diversity of the body of Christ.

Duration: 46:06

Scripture: Mark 16:17-18, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 1 Corinthians 12:29-31, Ephesians 4:11-12

Topics: "Spiritual Gifts", "Church Unity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of love as the foundation for spiritual gifts. The speaker emphasizes that the gifts are meaningless without love. The speaker also addresses the issue of divisions within the church caused by pride and the belief that certain gifts are superior to others. The speaker uses the analogy of the human body to illustrate the unity and interdependence of the members of the church.

Transcript

Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant. The word gifts, if you notice in your Bible, is italicized, and that means that it wasn't in the original text. It was inserted by the translators.

But as you look at the entire context, it seems that that is indeed what Paul is referring to. So the translators were accurate in inserting the word gifts. So Paul says to them, I don't want you to be ignorant in regard to spiritual gifts.

There is an appalling amount of ignorance in the church today when it comes to this particular subject. Generally speaking, you have two extremes that you will note in the church today. You have the one extreme that you would see among what you might refer to as the conservative evangelicals, and that extreme is demonstrated in their denial of much of the Holy Spirit's ministry for today and in their denial of many of the gifts as being available to us today.

Now, that's one extreme. But then we have the other extreme, which you might refer to as the more charismatic evangelicals. And what you see there is not a denial of the gifts of the spirit, but an exaggeration and going beyond what the Bible actually teaches and allows for.

And unfortunately, there are very few churches that seem to be able to strike the biblical balance. You have so often the experience of a church that's maybe doctrinally accurate, but yet practically dead. Or

you have the other extreme of a church that's doctrinally unsound and more alive than you would ever want it to be.

And some of you have been in both places, so you know exactly what I'm talking about. But there is a biblical balance. I think for the most part in this country, the pendulum has swung more to the charismatic side of things.

I've been listening to a series by D.M. Lloyd-Jones on the subject of revival, and he preached that series back in 1959. And he was emphasizing the need for the present day ministry of the Holy Spirit. Well, now, some 40 years later, we are at the complete other extreme for the most part.

We see so many things going on in the modern churches that are being attributed to the Holy Spirit, but yet there's absolutely no biblical basis for what is happening. And it's brought about all kinds of chaos and confusion. And ultimately, it's brought about devastation into people's lives.

So, as I said, this is very relevant to us. Paul's desire for the Corinthians, that they would not be ignorant of spiritual gifts. That is something that we need to have understanding on as well today.

There is, as I was saying a moment ago, there is the biblical balance. And if we just stick with the scriptures, if we follow them closely, then we do not have to fear going to one extreme or the other. Many people who have experienced the negative side of the charismatic thing tend to often overreact and become completely paranoid of any mention of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And that, of course, is the wrong reaction. We want to come back to the middle, not swing to the other side. We want to know what the Bible has to say, because, of course, the Holy Spirit is a third person of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is God and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are his endowments upon us in order that we can fulfill God's will and purpose in our lives. So we need to understand biblically the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the gifts that the Holy Spirit has available. And that's what we'll be doing over the next several weeks.

So in verse two, Paul says to them, you know that you were carried away. You know that you were Gentiles carried away to these mute idols. However, you were led.

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. Now, it's hard to say for certain just what Paul is referring to here.

We don't know exactly what went on that caused Paul to make the statement that he did in the third verse. But apparently someone. Who was seen to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit had uttered that Jesus is accursed.

And so Paul is telling them that that is not the influence of the Holy Spirit. Now, it would seem to me that that would be so obvious. But yet, amazingly, people will concentrate more on the experience that someone's having and ignore the content of what they might be saying, even though what they might be saying is obviously wrong.

It would be obvious, I think, to anyone that no one under the influence of the spirit would call Jesus accursed. But yet today we see things going on in churches that are being attributed to the Holy Spirit that

I think for anyone who has any amount of biblical knowledge or any amount of discernment, they would have to say that this cannot be a manifestation of God's presence. But yet, unfortunately, the obvious is being overlooked, as was the case here.

So Paul sets the tone by reminding them of this. Now, what it appears is that the Corinthians were so taken up with the experience. That's all they were really concerned with.

They were so impressed by an experience that the experience became the end all. And as long as people were having an experience, it didn't really matter what else was going on. I think the same thing is happening in many churches today.

The emphasis is on an experience. People are hungry, in a sense, for God. I think that that is a fact.

People want an experience and having an experience with God is legitimate. Of course, God is personal and we are people and God has created us to have a relationship with him. And there is an experiential aspect to our relationship with God.

But we have to be careful not to overemphasize the experience and not to just seek an experience. We need to seek the Lord. And if that results in an experience, wonderful.

If it doesn't result in an experience, that's OK, too, because our Christian life is not simply just one big experience. There are times when we don't necessarily have an emotional experience. There are times when we walk by faith and not by sight.

There are times when we don't really sense or feel necessarily God's presence. But nevertheless, by faith, we know that God is with us and that he's working in our midst. And so Paul is bringing that to their attention, that the experience is not the primary criteria by which to judge whether or not God is working.

Because you can go and investigate a multitude of religions and you can find that there's plenty of experience in religion. Experience isn't the criteria to judge whether or not something is right or wrong or whether or not something is true. We have the biblical standard that's been given to us.

And that's how we can determine whether or not we're having an actual experience with God or maybe just an emotional experience or even possibly an experience with the forces of darkness. That is also a possibility. So Paul going on in verse four, he's going to get now into the subject of the gifts, but he's not really going to go into detail on him at this point.

He saves that for later. His real desire in this 12th chapter is to deal with some of the divisions that have developed in the church because of pride on the part of certain people who felt that one gift was superior to another. And that's what he's mainly going to contend with them over.

So he says this, there are diversities of gifts. But the same spirit, there are differences of ministries, but the same Lord, and there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. So, first of all, he tells them that the ministry of the spirit is going to manifest itself differently among God's people.

In other words, not everyone is going to have the same exact experience with a particular gift of the spirit. You see, God has created the church as the body of Christ and the church is the body of Christ is a diverse, yet a unified body. We are united in Christ and the unity is vital, but there's also within the unity there is a diversity.

God did not call us to all conform to just one particular model. God allows us to retain our individuality. And God wants to take who you are as a person and he wants to put his spirit upon you and he wants to bring his gifts through you.

And in a sense, he wants to do something unique through your life because of who you are. So often in the church, we find that there's pressure to conform. Now, we are all being conformed, but we're all being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ.

We're not really to be conformed into the image of one another. But unfortunately, in some in some churches, everyone is called to conform to a certain kind of a model. And you go into some churches and it seems that the church is full of clones.

Everyone acts the same. Everyone talks the same. Everyone, you know, it's just they've all been popped right out of a mold.

But God never intended that. God didn't call us to lose our personality when we became Christians. God hasn't called us to leave aside our talents and all of those things.

Of course, those things are God's gift. He's given us those things. He's he's given us a certain personality as as a young pastor and Bible teacher.

I remember, you know, struggling in a sense with identity as as a teacher and wanting to, you know, find out what my niche was, so to speak. And I remember I would I would either listen on tape to certain Bible teachers or I would read some commentaries and then I would seek to emulate that person. I would I would want to mold myself after them.

You know, you would admire them and you think, oh, yeah, that's the model right there. If I could just be like that person. And I remember one time many years ago, I picked up the the series on Ephesians by D.M. Lloyd-Jones and and I read through that series and I so much enjoyed it and I so much admired the way Lloyd-Jones taught.

And so there came a point when I was going to teach Ephesians and I was going to do it just like Lloyd-Jones did it. And I attempted to do so, and after a few weeks of attempting, I found that I was an utter failure. I could not be Lloyd-Jones.

I didn't have the mental capacity he had. I didn't have the powers of oration that he had. I didn't have the same type of gift on my life that he had.

And I remember becoming really depressed over it. And I remember also clearly God speaking to me and saying, Brian, I saved you and I called you and I've anointed you to be you, not somebody else. And it was really a liberating thing in my life to realize that God wanted to take me for who I was.

All of my insufficiency, all of my inadequacies, and he wanted to use me and my personality and those things. And I didn't really have to fit into somebody else's mold. Last week, we had Greg here sharing with us, and I've always enjoyed Greg's teaching.

And one of the things that I enjoy about Greg is his humor. He's an extremely funny guy. He's just, you know, wherever you are with him, you're generally laughing.

It's not just something that he does, you know, as he's out preaching. He's just a funny person. And I used to listen to Greg and go to his Bible studies and things years ago.

And there was a time when, you know, I wanted to be just like Greg. And and yet the futility of that, he's naturally funny. I'm not.

He's naturally energetic. I'm not. And, you know, Greg talks really loud, as he mentioned, and he talks really fast.

And there was actually a period in my life as a teacher where I did try to emulate him. And sometimes people will pick up some of those tapes and they'll listen and say, Brian, you talk so fast back then. You've really slowed down in your old age.

Yeah, I was actually slow back then, too, but I was trying to speed it up because I thought that's the way you got to do it, you know. So point is this. There is unity.

In the body of Christ, but there's also diversity and God wants you to be who you are, and so often we feel inferior. We look at someone and we think, oh, I could never serve the Lord because I'm not like that person. I could never really do anything for God because I don't have those same kinds of abilities.

You know what? That doesn't matter. God made you the way you are and he wants to use you for who you are. Because there are certain people that actually are going to be more affected by you than by the person you admire and would like to be.

The person you're admiring and would like to be could not impact certain people that you will be able to impact because of who you are. So we have to remember that, and that's what Paul is going to be emphasizing to these guys as he goes on. Now, he says in verse seven, but the manifestation of the spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.

Now, we're going to come back and deal with this more specifically next time. So I'm not going to get into detail here. We'll move on.

But just let me comment here. Notice the manifestation of the spirit, the gifts of the spirit that he's talking about. Notice they're given to each one for the profit of all.

See, God has given gifts to the body so that the entire body might be profited. A gift from God is not something for me simply to hoard. It's not something for me to use for my own personal gain.

It's not something for me to simply derive benefit from. It's something that God gives to me for the benefit of other people. Remember that about the gifts.

And now he goes on, he says, for what for to one is given the word of wisdom through the spirit, to another, the word of knowledge through the same spirit, to another faith by the same spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same spirit, 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. But one in the same spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as he wills. An important point here.

God is the one who decides who gets what gift. He distributes the gifts of the spirit according to his will. Now, Paul will tell us later to to desire the best gifts and so forth.

And there's nothing the matter with saying, oh, God, I would love to have, you know, whatever gift it is that you are the most fond of. But remember, at the end of the day, God is the one who determines who gets what gift. And of course, he knows the best because he's the head of the body.

We are the body of Christ. We're members of that body. We are the various parts of the body of Christ.

But the parts must function in unison with the head. And of course, the head knows what the various parts are to be doing. So God.

In his sovereignty, he gives. Gifts as he wills. And I have found.

That there's no way to really understand why God does things the way he does. Now, I think. Being in a position that I'm in, I have a different experience than the average person who's part of a fellowship.

In that the average person who's part of a fellowship generally will, you know, see someone that God is using, say, a pastor or an evangelist or someone like that, and they will enjoy tremendously their ministry and benefit greatly from it. But they will see the person to a large degree from a distance. And when you see a person from a distance, it's easy to.

Draw certain conclusions that aren't perhaps necessarily. Accurate. So, in other words, you might sit out here week in and week out and, you know, because you come here and God ministers to you through the teaching and so forth, you might get an impression of me that isn't absolutely accurate.

You might think that I am a particularly holy person. You might think that, you know, there's something about me that, you know, I'm actually probably just a little bit closer to God than the rest of you. And, you know, it's easy for this to happen, isn't it? We do this all the time.

I do this. Everybody does this. The person that God is using, you tend to think that there must be some special thing about them for God to use them like they do.

But what I was saying a moment ago is being in the position I'm in, I get to have firsthand experience with a lot of people that God uses in very powerful ways. And I can tell you that they are very human. That there's nothing particularly holy about them, I'm not saying that to advocate that we should be unholy, and I'm not implying that these people are unholy either.

What I'm saying is simply this, that they're just human beings, they're sinners. And so going back to what I said, you know, when as God distributes the gifts, we might think, oh, this person got that gift because they were there was something special about them. Not so.

I've often wondered why God has called me and gifted me to do what I'm doing. And as I take a survey of my life, I've concluded over and over again, well, it doesn't have anything to do with me, in a sense, it really doesn't. I'm not saying that, you know, to give you the impression I'm humble.

I'm saying that as a matter of fact, it's a matter of fact. So we have to we have to guard ourselves against this idea that someone who is gifted is then by necessity spiritually superior to other people. And as Paul's going to go on to show, we need to always guard ourselves against the idea that one gift is superior to another or that because one person has, you know, maybe a more obvious gift, that person is more important than someone else.

There is to be an equality in the body of Christ, and there isn't to be this kind of division that develops. Because one person is more vocal or one person is more seen than someone else, what Paul is going to go on to show is that every member of the body is vitally important to the functioning of the body. And so he says, for as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ, for by one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free and have all been made to drink into one spirit.

So we've all, all of us, every believer has been baptized into the body of Christ by the spirit. So we all partake of the same spirit of God. And the idea here that Paul wants to communicate is this is the thing that unifies us.

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he said to them, endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit. You see, it's the spirit's presence in each of our lives that brings about the unity. There is the diversity based on who we are, but it's the presence of the spirit in our lives that brings about the unity.

I don't know if you've had this experience or not, but I have. I've had the experience of going all over the world and meeting Christian people. And when I meet a person who is genuinely a Christian, although I might have known them for 30 minutes, I feel like I've known them forever.

There's something unique. There's something special. There's there's a bond.

That's the bond of the spirit. And Paul is saying to these Corinthians, you all have this in common. You're all part of the same family.

And in his analogy, you're all members of the same body. So he's going to go on and show how the members of the human body would never contend within themselves for a place of superiority. But each member in the human body is content to fulfill its function, recognizing that its function is vital to the overall performance of the body.

So he says, for in fact, the body is not one member, but many. Speaking of the human body, if the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I am not of the body. Is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I am not of the body.

Is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But God has set the members, each one of them in the body just as he pleased. Just as God has put our physical members together as our creator. He's put our bodies together quite well.

They function properly. Everything is in its right place. So likewise, God has done the same thing with the body of Christ.

He has put each member in the proper place. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now, indeed, there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you.

Nor, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Now, Paul is giving a very practical illustration here, isn't he? And we could ourselves go off in imagining what it would be like if various parts of our human body decided that they were no longer going to function in unison with the rest of the body. It would create a tremendous problem.

We would not be able to function. And so likewise, in the body of Christ, if each member revolts against its position in the body or fails to understand the importance of its position in the body, the body is not going to function. The body of Christ, the church, ideally is to function like the most healthy physical body.

Every member doing its part so that the body might attain to the full potential. The church of Jesus Christ, God has a potential for the church to reach to. God has a function for the church.

The church is to be doing something here in the world. And yet, the church cannot reach its full potential unless the members are in their proper place and unless they're functioning according to God's desire. It's so important that we understand that.

But yet, I think unfortunately, there is so much misunderstanding of that in the modern church. Some people who attend church on a regular basis every Sunday, they have never even realized that they have a place in the body, that they actually have a function to perform. Some churches are structured in such a way that the people who attend the church see themselves more as spectators than participants.

And everybody who's up front, they're the players in a sense. And everyone else is there just to watch them play. Billy Graham, he likened the church to an American football game.

He said, you have 22 people on the field doing all the work and thousands of people sitting in the stands observing. And I think in a lot of churches, that's exactly the way it is. You have the hierarchy, you have the leadership and there's a vast gulf between the leadership and the people.

And in a sense, although it's probably never stated, in a sense, the people up in the front, these are the ones who are serving God and everyone else is just, you know, observing. And as long as you come and observe once a week, you're doing okay. What a bore.

You think that's what God saved you for? So you could just come and observe people use their gifts? Absolutely not. God saved you and he has a calling on your life. He has gifts to give to you and he wants to use you in his body to perform a certain function that's going to cause his church to attain the full potential.

As a matter of fact, God gave leaders to the church for the very purpose of helping the church rise to its full potential. Not so that the leaders could just rule over the laity and take care of all the spiritual business. I grew up in Roman Catholicism and my understanding was that the priests, they did all the work.

As long as I showed up at church once in a while and made a confession occasionally, they were going to take care of business for me. And when I died, I was going to be okay because they were there, that was their job. That's what they were there to do.

And not only did I have that impression, but it was clearly the impression that was given to me by them. But of course, I'm no longer Roman Catholic and having become a Christian and beginning to study the Bible, you see a whole different thing. You see, as Paul stated in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, that God gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ.

You see, God gave leadership to the church so that the church could be perfected so the work of the ministry could take place. Any church structure that thinks that just an elite handful of people are the ones that are going to do all the work of the ministry, they're fooling themselves. See, because the ministry isn't

just this, what we're doing here today.

This is part of it. But there's ministry that will go on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week when you walk out these doors, isn't there? You have ministry. You have ministry.

There's Christian people. You have ministry to one another. It might happen right here in this building.

It might happen outside of this building throughout the week. You have ministry to one another. You have ministry to other Christians that you might meet.

And of course, there's a whole world of non-Christians that we have ministry to as well. You see, the ministry goes far beyond what happens just on a typical Sunday. And unfortunately, so many people think only in those terms.

That ministry is just this thing we do once a week. It's not that at all. As Christians, we've been called to live a life.

We've been made a part of a body. And this is why it's so important for Christian people to be plugged into a fellowship. Because if you're not plugged into a fellowship, you're like a part of the body that's severed from the rest of the body.

So many Christians are living in isolation and living really devastated lives spiritually and wondering why they're in the condition they're in. Trying to go through the Christian life independently. And some you can, in a sense, understand why they're where they're at.

They've been so devastated. They've been abused. They've been used.

We're a body. We're a family. We're all part of the body of Christ.

God's called us all. We're all important to God. And He wants to use each and every one of us.

He has given gifts. And He wants us to come to understand what the gifts are that He's given us. And then He wants us to function in those gifts.

So that His body might attain the potential and impact the world the way He wants the world impacted. Now, in verse 22, Having referred to the eye, not saying to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor. And on our unrepresentable parts, and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty. But our representable parts have no need, but God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks.

Paul is alluding here to, first of all, he's alluding to the vital organs. The vital organs in the human body, they seem to be weaker, but yet actually, they are essential. Without your vital organs, you don't exist.

But how often do we really think about our vital organs? You get up in the morning, think about your liver a bit. You know, spend a few hours throughout the day meditating on your spleen. We don't really think about things like this.

We don't even so much think about our heart, which is quite vital, isn't it? These seem to be weaker. And in a sense, they are weaker. That's why they're protected the way they are.

But yet, they serve the greater purpose. And without them, the body could not function. So likewise, in the church, there are people who are not going to have gifts that are going to be so obvious.

They're not going to stand out. But yet, without them, the ministry could not go on. We have to see one another as vital to what's going on.

We need each other. But God composed the body, verse 24, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.

And if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ and members individually. So you see, apparently in Corinth, there was this competitive thing that had developed.

There was the attitude that one gift was better than another. And those who had the more dominant or the more obvious gifts were being exalted. And those that had the less obvious gifts or the less sensational gifts, they were being seen as insignificant.

And there was a competitive mentality that developed. There was envy. There was strife.

There was jealousy, all of those things. But Paul says, no, that should never be. Just as in our own human bodies, we should have the same care for one another that we would experience in our own human bodies.

If I have a particular part of my physical body that's ailing, I don't criticize that part. I don't abuse that part. What do I do for that part of my body that's ailing? I put the rest of my energy into taking care of that and restoring that and healing that.

And likewise in the church. And so he says, if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. If one is honored, all the members are honored with it.

To suffer with those who suffer, to rejoice with those who rejoice. A healthy body is seen when some individual in the body can be exalted and everyone can rejoice with them rather than being envious of them. Oh, why do they get to do that? Well, how come they're up there? Well, how come they mentioned that person and what they did? Why didn't they say anything about me? See, those are the things that can happen.

That's all sign of carnality. It's all a sign of forgetting that we're all members of the same body. And so when God honors and blesses one, we all rejoice together with that.

We rejoice to see another one exalted because we know that ultimately Christ is being exalted. We're in it for Christ. We're not in it for personal gain or notoriety.

So if someone else gets to exalt Christ and I'm not the focal point, I rejoice in that Christ is exalted. That's the important thing. That's what Paul is saying to them.

They needed to get back to that kind of understanding and get over this division and strife and contention. And remember, he's writing to a local church just like we have here. And this kind of competition and all that was going on right in a fellowship.

Could you imagine if that was going on here today? The environment that we would experience, it wouldn't be one of peace. It wouldn't be a one of sensing the presence of God. It would be one of strife and contention, and it would be a miserable environment to come into.

But as we keep the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace, as we recognize that everyone is important to God, as we recognize that we're all just in this together, we're all just serving the Lord. We're all just trying to do our part, but we're doing it finally for the glory of Christ. Oh, it's a wonderful experience.

It's a glorious experience. Now, Paul, in finishing things up here, he says, and God has appointed these in the church. So he's going to talk now about some of the gifts and some of the positions that God has appointed.

And God has appointed these in the church. First, apostles, second, prophets, third, teachers. Now, we'll get into this more later, but let me just say this in passing.

The ministry of the apostles and prophets, according to Ephesians 3:20, was a foundational ministry. They laid the foundation of the church. The apostles, we know them, Peter.

We know John. We know Andrew. And the various men that are listed for us in the New Testament, James.

These men were the apostles. And then there were also prophets in the early church. Barnabas was one of those prophets.

Paul, the apostle, was also referred to as a prophet in Acts chapter 13. These men laid the foundation of the church. And it's my belief that the present day ministry of the apostles and prophets is brought to us through the New Testament.

In other words, my conviction is that there are no current apostles or prophets in the sense that Paul refers to them here or in Ephesians. We have their ministry perpetuated through the New Testament. Their ministry was foundational.

It wasn't to carry on throughout all the ages except through the written word. So, apostles, prophets, third teachers. The thing that strikes me as interesting is that teaching is placed before miracles and healing.

And tongues, which the Corinthians seemed to think was the most desirable gift. Paul places it as last. But notice what he places first.

The apostles and prophets. That's the New Testament passed on to us. And then those who teach it.

Teaching. That's the thing that's lacking in the modern church. People are running after miracles.

People are running after signs and healing and all of this. Nobody's ever been taught how to get from A to B. No one's being taught how to walk with Jesus on a daily basis. But unfortunately, people are coming to churches and they're getting a big emotional surge.

You know, there's the music and the swaying and there's, you know, and there's all of that going on. And then you get up and leave. And then throughout the week, you're.

You just can't wait to get back and get that charge again. But how long does it last? It can't get you through the week, can it? That's not what God intended. God intended that we be fed.

And that's why he put teachers first, because teachers are to feed the flock of God. And that's what makes for a strong Christian life. It's being fed.

It's being nurtured. It's being taught. And then those other things.

Yes, they come along as well. But they're not the primary thing. And Paul shows that here clearly.

Miracles after that, the gifts of healings helps administrations, variety of tongues. Now, listen to verse twenty nine. Very important are all apostles.

These are rhetorical questions. There's an obvious answer. The answer to every one of these questions is no.

Listen to what he says. Are all apostles? No. Are all prophets? No.

Are all teachers? No. Are all workers of miracles? No. Do all have gifts of healing? No.

Do all speak with tongues? No. We must emphasize that because there are those today who demand that you speak with tongues. And if you don't speak with tongues, you're either not filled with the spirit or you're not a Christian in some cases.

But could we get a clearer statement? It's perfectly clear. Not everyone speaks with tongues. Again, we go back to the sovereignty of God.

We go back to the fact that God gives as he wills his gifts to people. And the question arises. If tongues is not the evidence of being filled with the spirit, what is the evidence of being filled with the spirit? Well, Jesus told us in Acts chapter one why we needed to be filled with the spirit.

In Acts chapter one, verse eight, he said, when the spirit comes, you will receive power that you might be a witness for me. The purpose of the spirit coming upon our lives and filling us is not so we can speak in tongues, although we might speak in tongues. But if we don't, that was not the intended purpose of the empowering of the Holy Spirit in the first place.

The empowering of the Holy Spirit was just that to come upon us, to give us power, to be witnesses for Christ. And you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be witnesses of me in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. You all interpret.

No, but earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way as we then move on, the entire 13th chapter is dedicated to the subject of love. Which has to be the foundation for everything that we do, and that's what Paul is talking about when he says, I show you a more excellent way.

He's not saying that just be loving and you don't need the gifts. What he's going to say is that the gifts are invalid unless they're based in love. And so we'll get to that as we move along.

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