

Bible Basics Conference 2015: The church

Part 8

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[00:00:01] So, we're going to just look briefly at gifts in 1st Corinthians chapter 12.

And I thought this scripture from Ephesians was helpful because it gives a sort of outline in a few words what is in fact the content of these chapters.

In chapter 12 we have the functioning of the body, each member functioning as they should through the gift that they are given, that which every joint supplies.

And in chapter 13 we have the motive, it should be in love at the end of Ephesians. And then chapter 14, the object, the purpose, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself.

[00:01:03] Now, the Apostle, the question he would first ask, that which he would desire for these Corinthian believers and for us all, is that we might know, that we might not be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts or spiritual manifestations, that we should know that it is the Spirit, the ministry of the Spirit and it's not from some other source such as the flesh or even Satan himself, that it is not demonic in origin.

John speaks of this in his first epistle.

Believe not every spirit, he says, but try the spirits, whether they be of God. Satan is ever seeking to intrude upon the things of the Lord and to lead his people astray. [00:02:01] How do we know, says Paul, that the spiritual manifestations are of the Holy Spirit? So he gives an example.

When they were Gentiles, before they knew the Lord, they were led away, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as you were led.

And so the flesh, Satan, he would lead us away from the Lord, lead us away from God to that which is false, to that which is blasphemous, that which does not give him any glory. In fact, dumb idols, there is no revelation from a dumb idol of God. But God has spoken and we read in the scriptures

that he has spoken in the Son, Hebrews chapter 1.

[00:03:01] And so the Holy Spirit, when he, the ministry of the Spirit, it honors the Lord Jesus.

It's the ministry that honors the Lord. No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed. The Holy Spirit will give the Lord his rightful place in the assembly and his ministry will be of that kind that exalts the Lord.

And then we read too, no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit. And so the Holy Spirit, that ministry which is of him will own the Lord's authority in the assembly.

The Lord said of his Spirit when he came, he shall glorify me.

[00:04:02] And so these gifts we read of in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, chapter 11, sorry, chapter 12, they are spoken of as spiritual manifestations because they would be that which, as it were, the Spirit takes up, uses in his ministry within the assembly. The supply comes from the Lord Jesus. We've heard of how he has ascended up on high, given gifts unto men. The supply comes from him but he works, he ministers in the assembly through his Spirit and we get the distribution of gift by the Spirit.

And so we have distinctions of gifts but the same Spirit.

And so with the Spirit we have the power and we are equipped to serve.

[00:05:04] It is through the Spirit that we are equipped to serve and given the power to serve. And then we have distinctions of services but the same Lord. It is through the Lord that we are directed in our service and given authority to serve.

And then we have distinctions of operations but the same God which worketh all in all. And the word for operations here is not so much the working but rather the results of service, the results of working, what is wrought in the soul, in the souls of the Lord's people, in their hearts, the results through the ministry of the Spirit, taking up the members of the body and each one functioning as they should. And that ministry goes on. The whole Godhead we see is involved in this great work. [00:06:05] And we see this pattern emerging again which we've seen in previous presentations.

Distinctions but the same, distinctions but the same, distinctions but the same. Because this is the order which glorifies God. Why?

Because it sets Him forth. Because in the Godhead itself, as we've heard, we have distinctions of persons but the same being, the same, the one God.

And so we have an order given to us which glorifies God because it testifies of Him. And so we have the gifts enumerated, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, [00:07:05] kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues. And we see how these gifts, they're not so much persons as we have had in Ephesians, but rather they are the Spirit working to equip us and the provision needed for a service for the Lord.

And so it's not so much wisdom as a gift but rather the word of wisdom.

It's just a word given, a word of wisdom. That's the Spirit working in one of the Lord's people. He gives that word of wisdom that's right for the occasion. The word of knowledge. Again, it's not knowledge as such but a word of knowledge. And then we have the gifts of healing, the working of miracles. Every gift has its place. [00:08:02] Prophecy. Again, it's not a prophet as we have in Ephesians, but prophecy. It's a word for the moment.

And we thought of this in Simon's address, how when the assembly comes together, is gathered together around the Lord Jesus, sometimes we look around and think, well, there's not much gift here. What are we going to do? But there's an abundant supply. The Spirit supplies the gift. We don't have to worry about that side of things. Our concern mainly should be that we are, that he's able to use us. That we're in a condition, a spiritual condition that he can take us up and use us in this ministry. And so it is the Spirit who divides to every man severally as he will.

And then the apostle goes on to speak of the baptism. We are baptized into one body. [00:09:02] We've already referred to this. Perhaps just say one thing. It is not the Spirit who baptizes, but it's the Lord who has baptized us. And that baptism, as we have thought, happened on the day of Pentecost. It's referred to as something that has passed. We, are we all baptized?

And it includes the whole body of Christ. It's every believer upon this earth. It can be said of every one of them. We have all been baptized into one body and we have drink into that one Spirit. Again, this is the drink that the Lord could speak of. The water that he would give, it will be in you, he says, as a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life. And this is the Spirit that we drink of as his people. The body is not one member, but many. I think we have to go quite quickly. But again, we see the working of the members of the body in these [00:10:03] Can the foot say, because I'm not the hand, I'm not of the body. We do not choose our function within the body.

We cannot say, well, because I'm not doing, I'm not got that gift or I'm not got that function. I'm not having, I'm not going to help out. I'm not going to have any function. I'm not going to help out. I'm not going to help out. I'm not got that function. I'm not having, I'm not going to help out. I'm not going to have any part in this. Because it is God who has set the members in the body as it has pleased him. So we do not choose our function. The question we must ask is the question that the Apostle Paul asked after his, immediately after his conversion. Lord, what will thou have me to do?

This is what we should be concerned about. What would the Lord have us to do? The matter of gift, well, he will supply that through his spirit. [00:11:01] We don't have to worry about that. We just have to be concerned that we are serving the Lord in the way that he would have us serve him. Again, we've spoken of this. We are the body, we are body of Christ. Characteristic. But let's just say a word about the members in particular. The only membership that's spoken of in scripture is the membership of the body.

We're not members of a local assembly. And we cannot speak of being members of a local fellowship. Because there's no such thing in scripture as a local fellowship. There is only one fellowship spoken of in scripture. And that is the fellowship of God's Son. And every believer is called to that fellowship. And so the apostle, he tells them to cover earnestly the best gifts. That's to say the gifts that benefit the assembly the most. They're the greatest gifts. [00:12:02] They're the best gifts. But he says, I'll show you a way.

Yet show I unto you a way of more surpassing excellence.

He's not saying here there's a way that's better than other ways. No. This is the way that he wants to show them. It's a way of more of overabundance of passing excellence. It's a glorious way.

And we have this spoken of in chapter 13.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I am become as a sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal. If I bestow, if I have all prophecy, understand all mysteries and all knowledge. If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and give my body to be burned. He says, if I have not love, I profit nothing. Love must be the motive for all service, for the use of gifts. [00:13:06] The Corinthians, they seem to be falling into the way of using gift somehow to increase their reputation amongst their brethren. For their own selfish interests. But the motive for using gift, the motive for service, must be love. There's an illustration perhaps we can look at in the amongst the servants of David. There were those who served him in his rejection in the cave of Adullam. And his general was Joab, who was the son of Zeruiah.

Now, if anybody was a great servant, surely Joab was, we might say.

He was a mighty warrior. He did great works of valor. [00:14:01] He fought the battles of David. And yet, he's not mentioned in the list of David's mighty men. The reason being, David could serve him. These men, the sons of Zeruiah, they'd be too hard for me.

He did not serve David out of love. He served him rather out of ambition, political ambition.

He wanted a place in David's kingdom for himself. And he would guard that place jealously at all cost. But we read of men who were David's servants. And they're called the three mightiest men that David had.

And what they did was to listen to the longing of his soul.

David longed and said, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem. [00:15:07] And they break through the rank of the Philistines. And they went to the well and got David that water and brought it back to him. And the Philistines must have been puzzled at this. They came through at the risk of their lives. They battled through the ranks. They went to the well. Between them, they fended off the Philistines and drew water out the well. And then they went back again the same way. What did they get? They got some water.

Philistines must have been laughing at them. But they were meeting the desire of David's soul because they loved him.

And so David poured out the water before the Lord. It was so precious in his sight. And so unless we do not serve the Lord out of love for him and love for his people, then our service profits nothing in his eyes.

[00:16:07] And so we read of this love, divine love, in chapter 13. I haven't got time to go through it, I'm afraid. But as we read those words, the manifestation of divine love, it's a familiar love, isn't it? Because it's the love of Christ. And in him was seen the perfect expression of it as he walked through this earth in manhood as the perfect servant. And the first six expressions of it, we find that it is a love that does not have self as its object. It is a love that sacrifices self. And then we find it is a love that

looks to God. [00:17:04] It has God as its object.

And so it is a love that knows no obstacle, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Nothing can quench that love because nothing is impossible with God. All things are possible with God.

And so it is a love that never fails. That is to say it always obtains its object because it's divine. And the Lord Jesus said, continue ye in my love.

This is the love that we must continue. And it's not human in its origin. It's divine. It's the love of Christ. And it's the love of God. And we read, don't we, that it's shed abroad in our hearts. [00:18:02] Well, finally, Paul says to the Corinthian believers that they were occupied with gift.

He says to them, gift, in effect he's saying to them, gift is a means to an end.

The end is, as we have thought, maturity, full growth, completeness. And gift plays its part.

Gift adds a part to that, that purpose of God with his people.

But it's not.

But it's only something that is a means.

God takes it up.

The Spirit takes it up. He uses it.

And then it's set aside.

And he says, but these abide three things. He's, as it were, gently leading them away from being so occupied with the gift itself. [00:19:04] He's saying that these abide, these three things, faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love.

Because faith, well, faith and hope, we will not bring those two things into heaven with us. Faith, we read in Hebrews 11, the conviction of things not seen. Well, when we see those things, faith will be no more. It will give way to sight. And hope, well, Romans 8, 24, but hope that is seen is not hope.

For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? Again, we will not bring hope into heaven with us because we will see what we hope for. And then hope will be realized. But love is God's nature, is the very nature of God. Love is eternal.

We will know that love for eternity. That love will be upon us for eternity. [00:20:03] And it is that love, the love that he has given us, the love that we possess, because we are of that nature that he has given us, that nature of God. We will love. And so love is eternal. And it is love that glorifies God and should be the motive for all that we do. And so he says, follow after love.

Three principles in chapter 14.

Follow after love.

Let all things be done unto edifying. Let all things be done decently and in order. The last two, let all things be done to edifying, let all things be done decently and in order, are as a result, actually, of love. Because if we desire the good of our brethren, if we desire the edification of our brethren, [00:21:01] it's because we desire their welfare, their good. And love desires the good of our brethren.

It's because we desire their welfare, their good. And love desires the blessing of that which is loved.

Let all things be done decently and in order. This is a matter of obedience to God.

And obedience is the proof of love.

If you love me, the Lord said, obey my commandments. Obedience is the proof of love. He said to the Lord when he was here upon earth, that the world might know, he said, that I love the Father. And as the Father has given me commandment, so I do. Let us go forth.

And of course, the great test of obedience, he was going forth to the cross, the great proof of his love.

[00:22:06] And so, the apostle in chapter 14, he's speaking of the use of the gifts when the saints are gathered together, particularly. And he's saying that if they are to edify, if the gift is to be used for edification, then it must be understood.

What is said must be understood.

It must be clear.

So, if I pray in a tongue, he says, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. Again, the apostle is gently teaching them that the gift of tongues, which they were so enamored by, it would seem, [00:23:02] is not a gift appropriate to use in the assembly.

Because if one in the assembly speaks with the tongue, he knows what he's saying, his spirit prayeth, but he doesn't understand the words that he's using to express his thoughts.

So, his understanding is unfruitful. And if he doesn't understand those words, how can the assembly understand those words? And so, it is not a gift that's suitable for the assembly. And then he goes on to show them how the gift of tongues is in fact not for the believer at all.

It's for the unbelieving, not for the believing. So, it's not suitable for the assembly. And he quotes this scripture from Isaiah.

In the law it is written, with men of other tongues and other lips I speak unto this people, and yet for all that [00:24:02] they will not hear me, saith the Lord. Tongues were a sign that were given primarily to Israel, that unbelieving nation. And God took up the rod of the Gentile nations and the foreign tongue of the invader was heard in the land of Israel. And they were conquered by that foreign nation.

And so, God was speaking to them not through the Hebrew tongue and not through the scriptures as he had done, speaking directly to them in their own tongue. But he was chastening them through the tongue, through the invading conqueror. They heard foreign tongues. And on the day of Pentecost, God addresses the company on that day, many hundreds there, all Jews.

He addresses them not in the Hebrew tongue [00:25:03] but in the tongues of the nations.

Again, it is a sign to Israel that now he's setting them aside and he's going directly to the nations speaking in their own tongues.

And so tongues is not to be used in the assembly. It's not suitable.

It's not appropriate. It's not for the believer. It's for the unbeliever.

But the important principle is that when a gift is used, it must be to edify the people of God.

It's not to be used to exalt the one who is using the gift but to glorify Christ and to edify his people.

And then this principle that the apostle sets before them, God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the assemblies of the saints.

[00:26:01] With the Corinthians, it was mainly disorder. They were a disorderly company.

And that is one danger. Instead of having the divine order that God has given us, there is disorder.

But there's another danger too. And that is that we bring in our own order. We bring in man's order.

And again, just an illustration before we close, David, again, his heart was right.

You see, we might say, well, surely providing we're sincere, providing we've got a good heart, does it really matter how we approach the Lord? He knows our hearts. He knows our sincerity.

But David, he had a good heart.

He wanted to bring the ark back to Jerusalem, to Zion, [00:27:02] its true resting place. So he had a good heart, good intention. But he went about it the wrong way. He took, he followed the lead of the Philistines in the way he brought it back. He got himself a new cart and put it on the new cart. And as a result, there was disaster and tragedy.

The oxen that were pulling the cart, they stumbled.

And it looked like the ark was going to fall off the cart. And Uzzah, David's dear friend and a godly man, he acted on instinct.

He acted upon the natural inclination of his heart and he put out his hand to stop the ark from falling off. And God broke out in judgment and slew Uzzah.

So we see that there was an order there that God could not own [00:28:03] and it ended in judgment. It

was the order of nature, the order of natural inclination, of instinct.

But we have the divine order.

And David reflected upon this and he could say, we sought him not after the due order.

We sought him not after the order that was due to him, that glorified him.

But David did bring the ark back, born by the Levites and the priests, in the way that he read in the book of Moses, in the scriptures themselves. And as a result, we read in 2 Samuel 6, verse 17, the ark of the Lord, he brought back the ark of the Lord and set it in his place in the midst.

And if we are to give the Lord his rightful place in the midst, [00:29:03] then we must be obedient to the order that he has given us in the assembly, the order that glorifies himself.

And then finally, we see the effect.

If the Lord has his rightful place in the midst of his own, even if an unbeliever comes in, or an ignorant, somebody who is ignorant of the truth, the unbeliever, one who resists the truth, the ignorant, the one who doesn't know the truth, if they come in and they have that prophetic word, which Paul is encouraging the Corinthians regarding, because it's the word that brings blessing to the assembly, that can fix the heart, can fix the conscience, and brings the soul into the very presence of God, well, even if such one as an unbeliever comes in, he will fall upon his face, he will be, it says, [00:30:05] in verse 24 of chapter 14, if one that believeth not, or one unlearned, come in, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all, and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and what will be his report? That God is amongst you, of a truth.

The power of the Lord Jesus in the assembly is known, his glory is known, and his love is known.