

1 CORINTHIANS SERIES #29

"Spiritual Gifts" - Part 1 1 Cor. 12:1-3

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Labels

1. We use them a lot
 - a. helpful - identify things more quickly
 - b. but, not always accurate
 - c. so can be somewhat dangerous
2. Ex.: In Russia "Hamburger"
3. Labels useful, but not always accurate
4. And so - often misleading
5. No where more true than when it comes to the Church
 - a. many labels to describe different flavors of Christianity
 - b. liberal, fundamentalist, evangelical
 - c. orthodox, Catholic, Protestant
 - d. High-church and non-conformist
 - e. Charismatic, non-Charismatic, and Pentecostal

B. Controversy

1. Since its beginning, the church has been plagued by controversy (proof it isn't in heaven yet)
2. Debates have raged over . . .
 - a. doctrine
 - b. church government
 - c. worship
 - d. social issues
3. recent times have seen all these areas provide lots of controversy
4. But probably the biggest area of controversy in recent years has been the debate over the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian
 - a. and so there are the . . .
 - b. Pentecostals, Charismatics, and the non-Charismatics
 - c. to this we should probably add the "I-couldn't-care-less-imatics"

C. Today

1. 1 Cor. 12 begins a 3 chapter section on spiritual gifts and their proper use in the Church
2. And since this is an issue of such heated controversy, we need to take the time and effort to look at it carefully
3. We here at Calvary come from a diverse background

- a. some from a Pentecostal church
 - told that unless you spoke in tongues you weren't saved
- b. others from a non-charismatic background
 - told that if you did you weren't saved
- c. still others are from a soft-charismatic background
 - you're just confused
- 4. So, we begin today with the first 3 verses of ch. 12
- 5. But in the next few weeks we will be taking a comprehensive look at the ministry of the HS = FROM THE BIBLE
- 6. Too many people today are drawing their theology from their experiences rather than from God's Word
- 7. So it's not wonder that a lady calls up a Christian TV program to express her joy that her dog was barking in tongues.
- 8. We'll do a bit better with our study of the Holy Spirit than that!

II. TEXT
A. V. 1

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

- 1. We already know that there were big problems at Corinth
 - a. Paul has dealt with several of them already
 - b. they were carnal; acting as immature little babes
 - c. they were divided into factions because of their jealousies
 - d. they were struggling with immorality and perversion
- 2. What comes as a bit of a surprise is to realize that they were a church that believed in and practiced the gifts of the Spirit in a wide open way
- 3. By modern standards this church would be called a holy roller church
- 4. But for all their spiritual gifts, they were horribly spiritually immature
- 5. Paul commends them for the abundance of their spiritual gifts, but he tells them they are using them all wrong.
- 6. When he begins with the words, "**Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be**

- ignorant"** he was saying something sure to raise the ire of the Corinthians
- a. ignorant of spiritual gifts?
 - b. why, they had spiritual gifts wired!
 - c. they thought
7. Apparently there was a controversy in the church about the use of spiritual gifts.
- a. we know that they had written a letter to Paul asking him his views on different issues
 - b. he wrote back to them answering each of their concerns
 - c. he begins each new answer with the words, "Now concerning . . ." which we find here
8. Notice that the word "*gifts*" is in italics; that means it was supplied by the translators and is not found in the original
- a. literally v. 1 reads, "Now about **spirituals**, I do not want you to be ignorant."
 - b. not referring to Afro-American folk-songs
 - c. the idea is this: Paul wants to speak to them about spiritual things, about things relating to the spiritual life
9. He doesn't want them to be ignorant, which apparently they were and that's why he writes to them the things of these three chapters.
10. Remember, the Corinthians were a church aflame with supernatural spiritual gifts - but they were still ignorant of spiritual things
11. The reason I am making such a point of this today is because there are those in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches who think that they are somehow more mature and have attained a deeper level of spiritual maturity than those who are not a part of their churches
12. It should be clear to us that familiarity with spiritual gifts does not guarantee spiritual maturity
13. In fact, in my experience, some of the most carnal Christians I have ever met spoke in tongues and danced in worship while some of the most loving and mature believers I have known did not believe many of the gifts of the Spirit were available today
14. As we will see, the issue isn't whether or not a person has the Spirit, but whether or not the Spirit has the person
15. There is much ignorance today about the role of the HS in the life of the believer

- a. that is sad because there is so much clear teaching in the bible on this subject
- b. Paul did not want the Corinthians to be ignorant of the Spirit's ministry
- c. God doesn't want us to be ignorant either
- d. that is why we are going to take the time over the next few weeks to study these things in depth
- e. but we won't JUST be studying
- f. we'll also be seeking to put into practice the things we learn
- g. truth isn't ours till we do it

B. V. 2-3

2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.

- 1. It is a bit hard to understand how these verses relate to the subject of spiritual things
- 2. What Paul is doing here is taking a step back from the more narrow discussion of gifts of the Spirit to the broader issue of the goal of the Holy Spirit's ministry which is to bring people to Christ as Lord and Savior
- 3. Before their conversion, the Corinthians were idol-worshipping pagans
 - a. Paul says they were *carried away* to idols
 - b. "carried away" translates a word meaning to be led away under an armed guard, like a prisoner being led away to prison or execution
 - c. that is the perfect picture of a person before conversion
 - they are a captive
 - a slave who is forced to live a certain way
- 4. Non-Christians love to declare their freedom to do what they want
 - a. they think becoming a Christian means giving up their freedom
 - b. they see the Christian life as a narrow straight jacket of rules and regulations:
 - "*Don't smoke, don't chew and never go with those who do.*"
 - c. several people I have shared with have resisted by saying that they enjoyed their freedom

5. But they aren't free
 - a. they are slaves to sin
 - b. they are in bondage to satan
 - c. the tragedy is that they can't even see it
 - d. they have come to mistake their bondage for freedom

6. I grew up in a believing home
 - a. my mother was a devout and committed Christian
 - b. I grew up with a good knowledge of the bible
 - c. but when I got to my teens years, I turned away from my upbringing and decided to try my hand at a few things
 - d. my pursuit of freedom took me into drugs, drink, and the party-life
 - e. I really thought I was free!
 - f. but the foundation of truth my mother built in me would not be destroyed
 - g. Proverbs says that parents are to train up their children in the way that they should go and when they are old they will not depart from it.
 - h. my mother held fast to that promise and I returned to the faith I had professed at an earlier age
 - i. after I recommitted my life to Christ, I suddenly realized how blind I had been while I was away from Him
 - j. the freedom of my rebellion was no freedom at all; it was bondage
 - k. there were times when I couldn't help but shed tears of shame and agony for the stupid things I had done
 - l. I remember walking through Maranatha Village one evening after church.
 - looking for my first Christian poster or something to hang on the wall of my apartment
 - many good ones but none seemed to strike my fancy
 - then I saw one that captured my heart completely
 - "Free In Jesus"

7. [To those who do not know Christ . . .]

8. Before their conversion, the Corinthians worshipped idols that could neither hear nor answer them

9. But after their conversion, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and entered into a new spiritual reality

3 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.

10. Students of the bible have long pondered over just why Paul wrote this
 - a. certainly it is true and quite obvious
 - b. but why insert it here in the middle of this discussion of spiritual things?
11. It must be a conclusion to what we find in v. 2 because he begins, "Therefore . . ."
12. Paul is simply showing that the Holy Spirit is the critical factor in a person's confession of faith
 - a. if a person is filled with the HS, he or she could never say, "Jesus is accursed"
 - b. so, only those who are not indwelt by the HS could say such a thing
13. It was a pledge of allegiance to Rome to recite the formula, "Caesar is Lord" while burning a pinch of incense
14. In the early centuries of the church, countless thousands if not millions of Christians were put to death simply because they would confess no one Lord but Jesus Christ.
15. One notable example was Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, and a student of the Apostle John's
 - a. Polycarp was an old man, in his 80's
 - b. rounded up in a persecution of Christian leaders
 - c. offered a chance to recant as he stood tied to the stake
 - d. proconsul said, "Worship Caesar as Lord, blaspheme Christ, and I will let you go."
 - e. Polycarp looked him in the eye and said, "Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and he has never done me wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"
16. Rather than denying Christ, the HS gives a person the power to declare Him Lord.
17. Paul says it this way, **"No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."**
18. He does not mean to simply mouth the words, "Jesus is Lord."
 - a. for Paul, to say something meant to live it

- b. he saw a person's profession as the first step of their whole Christian walk
- 19. Jesus said that there would be many who would call Him "Lord" but who did not own Him as Lord
 - a. to these Jesus says He does not know them
 - b. it is possible to mouth the right words and sound like a Christian when in fact a person is *not* born again
 - c. but that is not what Paul is saying here
 - d. a close look at his letters reveals that when he referred to our spoken confession, he meant it in terms of our whole lifestyle
 - e. our actions speak louder than words
 - f. that's what Paul is referring to here

C. Jesus Is Lord

1. The first creed of the Church were these words, "Jesus is Lord."
 - a. In Acts 2:36 Peter preached to the crowd in Jer. and said, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."
 - b. the rest of the book of Acts shows how they disciples looked to Jesus as Lord
 - c. those three simple words = "Jesus Is Lord" clearly defined their entire theology
 - d. they needed say no more
2. To say that Jesus is Lord means that He is the Master of your life
 - a. you are His servant
 - b. whose one desire is to live a life of obedience and faithful service
3. It's tragic that today there are those who think owning Christ as Lord is an option for the Christian
4. I mentioned earlier that the church has always had it's controversies
 - a. another one of the debates that is being waged among Christians today is called the Lordship debate
 - b. there are two basic sides in this issue
 - those that say a person can have Christ as Savior but not Lord
 - and those who say if He is not Lord, then He is not Savior
5. While you may have never been a part of an formal

discussion on this issue, the heart of this debate is common among Christians today

- a. we see it everytime we meet a person who claims to be a Christian but who lives a life of blatant compromise and sin
 - b. maybe you work with someone like that
 - c. or a family member
 - d. or a friend
 - e. maybe you are in that place yourself
6. I remember years ago talking with a friend about a guy we worked with.
- a. we had taken him to an evangelistic concert where he had gone forward at the altar call
 - b. but his spiritual life never went anywhere after that
 - c. he continued in the same sinful patterns of before
 - d. my friend said to me, "Well, he's accepted Christ as Savior but just has taken Him as Lord yet."
 - e. I nodded my head and said, "Oh."
 - f. but something inside me went, "What????"
7. Can we chop up Jesus into different parts?
- a. can a person take Jesus as Savior but not Lord?
 - b. can they enjoy the goodies without the commitment?
 - c. can we slice and dice the work of Christ into a salad bar religion
 - oh yes, a little eternal life
 - but no obedience
8. The answer is a clear, "NO!"
9. If Jesus is not Lord, then He is certainly not Savior
10. The gift of salvation is only received when a person repents of their sin and rebellion and turns to faith in Jesus as Lord & Savior
11. Jesus said this to His disciples, in John 14 **"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. . . . If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me."**

12. The first creed of the Church is still the best Creed of the Church = Jesus Is Lord
13. Notice carefully what Paul is saying in v. 3 of 1 Cor. 12
14. The HS is the one who brings a person to the realization that Jesus is Lord
15. He then enables a person to live under the Lordship of Christ.
 - a. before Christ we are slaves to sin
 - b. led away to the idols of this world which can neither hear nor answer us
 - c. but the HS opens our eyes to the truth and brings us to new life in Christ
16. All the gifts of the HS are aimed at this one thing: to bring us to Jesus as Lord
 - a. not to make us flashy and exciting
 - b. not to mark us as spiritually superior
 - c. not to wow the crowds and draw attention to ourselves and what great men and women of God we are
 - d. they are meant as tools that shape us into His image, that God might be glorified in all things through His Son.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Open Your Heart
 1. No matter what your background in the church has been
 2. Be praying that God will open your heart to the truth about the HS as we study these things for the next several weeks
 3. Don't let prejudice or experience color your judgment
 4. Instead, let the Spirit of God, working through the word of God renew your mind in truth
- B. Is Jesus Lord?
 1. Is Jesus Lord of your life?
 2. If not, then your Christianity is shallow and lacking
 3. To take Jesus as Lord does not mean you never sin again
 4. But it does mean that obedience to God becomes your real heart's desire
 - a. it means you stop rationalizing your sin
 - b. it means you repent of your waywardness and ask God to forgive you through the gracious gift of His Son

5. If you are one of those who is living in sin and yet making excuses for it, while all the time living under the illusion that your soul is safe with God, I plead with you to wake up.
6. The word of God says, not me, "Pursue holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." [\[1\]](#)
7. In Luke 6:46 Jesus said "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"

[\[1\]](#) Heb. 12:14