

Paul's Letters to the Church at Corinth

Spiritual Gifts and a More Excellent Way

1 Corinthians 12-13

Lesson 8

*Trinity Bible Church Sunday School
February 24, 2013*

1 Corinthians

- ▶ 1:1-9 Greeting and commendation
- ▶ 1:10-4:21 An appeal for unity in the church
- ▶ 5:1-6:20 Reports of sexual and legal immorality
- ▶ 7:1-16:18 Six questions in a letter to Paul
 - 7:1-24 Marriage
 - 7:25-40 Virgins (the betrothed)
 - 8:1-11:34 Food offered to idols
 - 12:1-15:58 Spiritual gifts
 - 16:1-11 Collection for the saints
 - 16:12-18 Apollos
- ▶ 16:19-24 Final greetings

Now Concerning Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12-15

- ▶ Spiritual gifts in the Church (12) – Common good
- ▶ Spiritual gifts in perspective (13) – More excellent way
- ▶ Spiritual gifts in order (14)
- ▶ The resurrection (15)

“I do not want you to be ignorant.”

- ▶ God’s wisdom v. human wisdom
- ▶ A warning from past religious experience
 - Engaged enthusiastically in false religious activity
 - You were led
- ▶ Spiritual warfare
 - 2 Cor. 11:13-14; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Eph. 6:10-20
- ▶ The defining criterion for activity of the Spirit:
 - “Jesus is accursed.” – a mere man who died as an imposter
 - “Jesus is Lord” (Lord = OT translation of YHWH)
- ▶ Holy Spirit produces this confession

Spiritual Gifts in the Church

- ▶ Varieties of gifts – the same Holy Spirit
- ▶ Varieties of service – the same Lord
- ▶ Varieties of activities – the same God
- ▶ The Spirit gives, the Lord is served, God is effecting

The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

- ▶ Wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues (12:8-10)
- ▶ 1 Cor. 12:28-30; Romans 12:6-8; Eph. 4:7-16
- ▶ Purpose of the gifts
 - 12:7 the common good
 - 12:11 sovereignly dispensed

The Body of Christ (12:12-31)

- ▶ One body
- ▶ So it is with Christ
 - Made members by the Holy Spirit
 - All believers – Jews, Greeks, slaves, free)
- ▶ Many members (12:14-20)
 - Unique functions – foot, hand, eye, ear
 - Essential
 - Arranged by God (12:18)
 - Mutual dependence (12:21-26)
 - Composed by God
 - No division
 - Mutual care and consequences – suffering and honor and rejoicing

Spiritual Gifts in the Church

- ▶ Apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healing, helping, administering, tongues
- ▶ Desire higher gifts – for common good
- ▶ A still more excellent way

The More Excellent Way (13)

- ▶ The necessity of love (13:1-3)
 - Tongues without love – banging on metal – absolutely no value
 - Prophecy, knowledge, faith without love – I am nothing
 - Philanthropy and self sacrifice without love – I gain nothing
 - Looking for the reward in “the Day” (3:13)
 - Judge yourself to avoid condemnation (11:32)
 - No personal blessing from gifts without love
 - Love is blessed, even without gifts

Love

- ▶ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (13:4-7)
- ▶ Judge yourself (11:27-31)
- ▶ Love is all the duty of man – love God and one another
- ▶ Love is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22)

Love and the Spiritual Gifts

- ▶ Love never ends
- ▶ Gifts are temporary and imperfect
- ▶ We are in childhood
- ▶ We see indistinctly through a glass – in part
- ▶ We are anticipating maturity and clarity
- ▶ Spiritual gifts do not remain
- ▶ These remain: faith, hope, love

The Greatness of Love

▶ Faith

- “Grateful and trustful acceptance of God as He reveals Himself

▶ Hope

- “perseverance in faith” (Calvin) – faith with main stress on future

▶ Love

- An attribute of God

▶ The greatness of love

- Partaking of the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)

Excellent and More Excellent

- ▶ Do not be ignorant about spiritual gifts
 - Important part of the plan of God for His people
 - Dispensed and empowered by and for the Triune God
 - Not for our personal enhancement
 - Desire the best gifts
- ▶ Pursue love – the more excellent way (14:1)
 - Exercise gifts in love
 - We love, even without gifts
 - Love the One we have not seen (1 Peter 1:8) and one another