

1 Corinthians Class 15 Transcript

Greetings, and welcome back to FI Online.

We're ready to begin class number 15 in our series on 1 Corinthians. But before we start class 15, we have **one question** from class 14.

1 Corinthians 11:14 tells us that long hair is a dishonor to a man. How are we then to understand the long hair of those men who had undertaken the vows of the Nazirites?

Well, the Nazirite vow comes from the Hebrew word *nazir*, which means “separated” or “devoted.” Scripture doesn't exactly tell us why a man might take a Nazirite vow, but it ultimately had to do with setting oneself apart for the purpose of drawing close to God.

Now today, when we want to draw close to God, we humble ourselves with fasting. But, fasting obviously has a limit as far as how long you can go. So it appears that perhaps the Nazirite vow gave someone the opportunity to humble himself over a longer period of time. Remember, the Nazirite avoided all products that were connected to the vine: grapes, raisins, wine, vinegar—all of those things.

They also avoided all contact with dead bodies, and they refrained from cutting their hair for the period of the Nazirite vow. That apparently was seen as an outward sign of humbling oneself. So anyone who saw them would recognize they were going through this personal humbling process. If somebody let their hair grow long and they weren't a part of this, it probably would have been viewed as kind of a fraud, some kind of hypocrisy.

Remember, though, that the Nazirite vow was a part of the Levitical system. It ended with a specific sacrifice. The head was shaved and the hair burned on the altar of burnt offering, and [there were] also some other cleansing rituals. So once the Levitical system ceased, then it was no longer possible for anyone to carry out a Nazirite vow. And certainly, in Corinth—since there's no temple, no altar of burnt offering, no priesthood—it wouldn't have been something done in Corinth, either.

So, the Nazirite vow is something that we, again, view historically. We recognize Samuel, or Samson, rather, as one who had a Nazirite vow, but otherwise, we just simply look at it as this historic thing that apparently had to do with an individual humbling himself.

All right, thank you for your question. We do want to begin our class by asking God's guidance. So if you would bow your heads, please.

[Prayer]

[3:45]

In our last class we finished up through **1 Corinthians chapter 11**. In that chapter Paul was talking about some very serious issues about the keeping of the Passover and some things that he felt he had to address right away.

He told us at the end of that chapter [**verse 34**]: “The other matters *I will set in order when I*

come.”

So, as we move into **chapter 12**, we are seeing a little bit of a shift in exactly what Paul is covering. But remember, part of the problem that was existing in **Chapter 11**, even at the Passover, was that there was a division within the Church because some individuals took care of themselves without really being concerned about the rest. And as we went through the last part of that chapter, with Paul talking about what he saw as important—what Jesus Christ had revealed to him about the Passover service—that it’s a very leveling service, that there is no one who is there who needs it more or less than anyone else, that there is no basis for pride, and that, in fact, as he said, our participation in it is an acknowledgment to our brethren there that we need to be there, just as they do.

I think it’s really interesting that when we observe the Passover, it is a ceremony that, really, if we’re prepared properly, there is no way you can go through the Passover service in pride. There is a great humbling that is involved for all of us as we examine ourselves and go through that very humbling service, with the foot washing and with the symbols that are given.

It’s interesting to me that the very next night we have the opportunity for The Night to Be Much Observed, when we come together and share with each other in a very special way. And I think it is that humbling on the Passover that has a great impact on our ability to celebrate the next night.

[5:47]

Now Paul continues on, and it appears as we begin into **chapter 12** that he is beginning to address another question that has come up—a question about spiritual gifts and how they should be used within the Church.

And he tells us here in [**1 Corinthians 12**] **verse 1**: *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:*

He recognizes that it’s important for us to understand about gifts, and, not simply that gifts exist, but what God’s intention is in giving people gifts. Now all by itself, we note right away that Paul uses the term “gift,” and that term is a term that refers to something that is—it relates back to that word that we use for “grace,” that has to do with “a gift given without regard to the worthiness of the recipient.” So the sense of this is: God is giving you gifts as a member of the body of Christ. It is God who gives you—or Jesus Christ who gives you the ability to do the various things that need to be done, and He gets the credit for it. We don’t. But why does He do that? And again, keep in mind the concept that gifts—though some may be more obvious than others, gifts are not intended to divide the Church, or, in some way to designate some people as more important than others. So Paul is going to develop that concept as we go through this twelfth chapter.

We will note, when he talks here about the spiritual gifts, that the word that is used here in this verse, *pneumatikōn*, is a word which emphasizes that God provides this gift through the power of the Holy Spirit. And he uses a different word in **verse 4**. The emphasis here in **verse 1** is in

making the point that these gifts come from God. They're not things that we as individuals bring to God. They are gifts that He gives to us to enable us to accomplish—well, let's see what it's supposed to accomplish as we go further.

Verse 2 *You know that you were Gentiles (Again, primarily, the Corinthian congregation was Gentile.), carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.*

Again, the aspect of the dumbness of the idol is not “stupid,” but “unable to speak.” “You are led about by something that can't talk to you.” And, obviously, that's not a very good leading.

[8:30]

We would perhaps tie in with this—I think it's fascinating—**Psalm 115 verses 4 through 8**, and here's what's written there:

Psalm 115:4 *Their idols are silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.*

5 *They have mouths, but they do not speak;
Eyes they have, but they do not see;*

6 *They have ears, but they do not hear;
Noses they have, but they do not smell;*

7 *They have hands, but they do not handle;
Feet they have, but they do not walk;*

Nor do they mutter through their throat.

8 *Those who make them are like them; (They don't hear; they don't understand; they don't see. And,) So is everyone who trusts in them.*

Now remember that idolatry was a very common thing in the pagan world. Idols were everywhere. When you went into one of these Greek cities or Roman cities, they're everywhere. Jerusalem was a unique city in that the idols weren't allowed in there. So, it was a very different world than what you would find wherever the rest of the Roman Empire was. So it was a common thing. And he said: “To those of you who come from that background, you were led from time to time in various directions by something that's dead, that doesn't have any ability to lead.”

[1 Corinthians 12:3] *Therefore, (he says,) I (want to) make (something) known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed (or “something given up for destruction”), and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*

Now this almost seems out of place here. What is he telling us?

In the first-century world, it was commonly—the statement about Jesus being accursed was commonly made by those Jews who rejected Christianity. They would refer back to **Deuteronomy 21 verse 23**, which said: ... *for he who is hanged (on a tree) is accursed of God.*

So they said: Jesus was hung up in this way as a criminal. He therefore is cursed by God. You cannot follow Him.

[10:42]

Now again, I want to read a little more extensive quote. This is from *William Barclay*. He says this:

It is by no means unlikely that the Jews would make proselytes attracted by Christianity either pronounce this curse or suffer excommunication from all Jewish worship. When Paul was telling Agrippa about his persecuting days, he said, "I often punished them in every synagogue, and I forced them to blaspheme." (That's from **Acts 26 verse 11.**) It must often have been a condition of remaining within the synagogue that a man should pronounce a curse on Jesus Christ.

Whatever was true when Paul was writing, it is certainly true that later on, in the sore days of persecution, Christians were compelled either to curse Christ or to die. When Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, (We have generally believed that Polycarp was probably a genuine minister of Jesus Christ. When he) was arrested, the demand of the proconsul Statius Quadratus was, "Say, 'Away with the atheists,' swear by the godhead of Caesar, and blaspheme Christ." And it was the great answer of the aged bishop, "Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and He has never done me wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"

So, it appears that this approach was one that was addressed, or an issue that did come up for some of the brethren who were being put in this kind of a position. And Paul is saying: an individual who is really dedicated to Jesus Christ, who is a true believer, who has the Spirit of God, could never bring himself to say something like that.

[12:27]

Then it goes on to say—now again, remember what it said there, the second part of that: *no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*

Now again, keep in mind—well, there are millions of people around us today who proclaim Jesus is their Lord, but they don't have the Holy Spirit. So, what is Paul saying here? Well, obviously, Paul is not telling us that by pronouncing a certain set of phonetic sounds, we make ourselves Christians, or we prove ourselves to be Christians because we can make a certain sound with our mouths. That's not the point.

He is making the statement that you cannot genuinely say **and live** the aspect of Jesus Christ being your Lord without the Holy Spirit. Being submissive to Jesus Christ, having Him as your Ruler in life is a tremendous challenge. It's more than anyone, as a human being alone, can do. Only with the help of God's Spirit can we truly have Jesus Christ as the one who is the Ruler in our lives. Only when that Spirit is given to us do we have the strength, the power, to resist what sin brings at us, to resist Satan's accusations and efforts to lead us astray, to tempt us, to pull us away. Only with that Spirit of God dwelling in us can we **successfully** resist Satan and his world and have Jesus Christ truly as the Lord of our lives.

So, the statement Paul is making is not: anybody who pronounces this idea is suddenly a

believer. No. That's not true. So, why does that come at the beginning of this discussion about spiritual gifts? Well, in the pagan world, worshippers of the various gods might well claim that they had supernatural powers. And, quite honestly, when we look at the prophecies of the future, we are told—for example, there in **2 Thessalonians 2 [verse 3]** about *the man of sin*—we are told that Satan gives him supernatural powers. It's not simply a matter that he is a deceiver, that he is able to pretend to do certain things. Paul makes it very clear that that great arch deceiver at the end of time, this great *false prophet*, the false religious leader just prior to Christ's return will have supernatural powers given to him by Satan.

Now if Satan does that at the end, do we ignore that fact as we look down through history? Don't we also recognize that in a certain way, he may give supernatural powers to others today as well? And that, I think, is part of what Paul is saying. Those worshippers from the pagan world may have seen people who had supernatural powers and wondered about that. But Paul is saying: "No, that's not a gift from God, and you need to recognize the difference."

[15:38]

How do you know what really comes from God?

Well, he continues. He tells us in **verse 4**:

[1 Corinthians 12:4] *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

Oh, God gives a variety of different gifts, but they all come from the very same Spirit. Every one of us receives whatever gifts God gives us because of the Spirit of God that He gives to us. But He gives different gifts to different people—not for the purpose of making one look more important than another, but simply so that different functions are carried out. And it also tells us that no one has **all** of the gifts that God makes available in the body of Christ.

Now let's notice that word "gifts." We said this one was different than the previous one. The word that's used here is *charismátōn*. It means "a favor bestowed, or received, without any merit on the part of the recipient." It can have to do with showing kindness to someone, and God certainly is doing that as He does give gifts to His people.

DEFINITION

Gifts = *charismátōn* = a favor bestowed without any merit on the part of the recipient

But one of the things I think is very important, and I'll try to explain this a little bit more when we get up to **chapter 14**, which talks more specifically about the gift of *speaking in tongues*. I think we are hampered in our understanding about God's gifts because of the false way in which some of these things have been done down through the ages. And people have certain ideas that if God gives a gift, it's like suddenly the sky clears, and lightning comes dashing down, and we see this miraculous event that leaves everybody gasping in awe!

Most of the gifts God gives are not that way. Most of them are quiet. Most of them are, in many ways, private. Many times, as we'll see as we go through this list of gifts that are involved here, they may involve things that we don't even recognize at the time are gifts. And yet God is providing these for a very specific purpose, which he's going to tell us as we go ahead here.

The fact that the gifts are given without regard to the merit of the person shows that God, through His Holy Spirit, is **deliberately** giving different gifts to different people. **He** knows what gifts are best for what individual, and He therefore provides them with the gift that's going to be best for them.

Now he goes on to say: **verse 5** *There are* —

He begins to illustrate these gifts.

[1 Corinthians 12:5] *There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.*

And we don't want to take the word *ministries* as if it's simply applying to the ordained ministry— the elders and so on. We could apply it, in a sense, in that way. But the word itself is *diakoniōn*, and it means “servings.” He's just simply saying there are differences in the way we serve, but it's the same Lord. Keep that in mind because Paul is wanting them to understand that the gifts God gives are not supposed to divide God's people; they're supposed unify, to bring us together, to enable us to work together to accomplish His purpose with deep appreciation for what every other person brings to the process. And he's going to emphasize that as we go further.

[19:20]

So there are all kinds of different ways of serving. Now I know one of the questions that's going to come up—it certainly comes up in my mind as I go through—is to say: Okay, if God's giving these gifts, how do I figure out what my gift is? How do I understand what it is that God is giving me in this special way? Well, we're going to talk about that, and so, stay tuned; we'll cover that as we go a little further. But I think we need to understand some of this first, and then we can come back to that question with a better understanding of it.

Going on to **verse 6**, he says, not only are there different types of service:

6 ... *there are diversities of activities,* —

In other words, even when a certain type of service is needed, there are different ways in which we may go about it, different ways in which different people may do that.

—but it is the same God who works all in all.

Now again, there is Paul's emphasis. We need to understand that it is God, the same God, working in each one, producing different gifts as He chooses to.

Now there're three important factors that are described here in this verse. So let's look at those factors. He talks about gifts. He talks about activities—opportunities, and he talks about activities as well. What do we mean by that? Well, in addition to, or in some cases even in spite of our own natural abilities, God gives to each individual unique gifts. He determines the areas in which those gifts are going to be used, the opportunities that we may have.

USING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Three factors to consider:

1. Gifts
2. Opportunities
3. Activities

He may open different opportunities for different people, even though they may each individually have the same gift. And, within those opportunities, there are different activities that are carried out, and God makes that possible for each individual. There are different specific acts of service, and God empowers us to carry those out.

Now in all three of those areas, though—keep in mind: gifts, opportunities, activities—God is the one who determines what is to be done, not man. It is not our job to try to choose the gifts we want, and Paul will again address that as we get to the end of this chapter and into the next one. Sometimes people separate these things out. But, to be honest, the question that seems to be asked by the brethren in Corinth about gifts is a question that Paul’s going to answer for three chapters—just like he did with the question about food offered to idols. We don’t want to read just a short section and think we have the full answer. Paul’s going to cover three chapters to give us a full answer to this question about godly gifts—spiritual gifts.

[22:25]

It’s not our job to choose which gift we want. It is God’s job to see what needs to be done and to give us the gift that’s needed for us at the right time. Our job is to use what He gives us, and that is crucial.

Verse 7 is crucial to this entire discussion. He says: *But the manifestation* (that which appears outwardly; that way in which the Spirit of God shows itself in a person’s life) —

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

That’s a very, very important concept. God gives gifts, and we, as human beings, can desire to have spiritual gifts from God. And again, we’ll see as we go further, there’s nothing wrong with that; that’s perfectly fine. And, in fact, Paul will tell us what we ought to be asking God about, what kinds of gifts we should ask Him for. But, we also need to understand that whatever gift it is that God gives to an individual, it is not for the profit of that individual. It is not to exalt that individual. It’s not to make them more important in the eyes of God’s people. It is a gift given for the benefit of everyone.

Now let’s just suppose—we’ll pull an example out. Suppose one of the gifts—and we won’t find it listed here—but suppose one of the gifts that God gives to a person is a musical ability. Some of us are just not that musical, and we just don’t have the ability to serve very effectively in that way. But there are some of you who have wonderful gifts in that way, perhaps in playing instruments. I’ve known a few people—I had a friend in college and another one later on—who basically could, at one level or another, play any instrument in the symphony orchestra. What an amazing gift! And, I will say, in both cases these individuals used that gift to serve the Church over a long period of years. And that’s a wonderful thing to do. That’s what should be. Not all of us have that same gift.

But now, perhaps you’ve also seen some individuals who maybe have a wonderful voice or a wonderful musical ability, but when they use that ability, it’s almost like they think: “Well, the spotlight is on **me** now.” That’s not really the way it’s supposed to be. If God gives us the ability,

that's wonderful. We'll see that God talks about other abilities that all of us will see and hear virtually every week. But He will also show us gifts that we may never see, that are done behind the scenes.

So let's notice what he says. Keep in mind, each individual is given the gift for the **purpose** of profiting all, or as we'll see Paul's metaphor as we go further, to profit the whole body of Christ. The whole body of Christ is supposed to be benefited by whatever gift God gives to you and to me.

[25:39]

So it also tells us something about unity, doesn't it? We want a unified Church; we want a Church where everyone is together—we don't have these little cliques develop or people with their own ideas and approaches. But it shows us in this section—as Paul very clearly understands—unity doesn't mean “uniformity.” It doesn't necessarily mean that all of us are exactly the same. We have unity as the body has unity, but the body is made up of all kinds of different parts, all of which are intended to benefit the whole body.

So let's go forward. **Verse 8** *for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,*

Now wisdom and knowledge probably can be taken in different ways. Knowledge basically has to do with the ability to define knowledge, to be able to study things out, to perhaps research and bring things together. Wisdom very often refers more to the practical application of that knowledge that someone may bring together. Throughout the times that we've been around the Church in the modern era, there have certainly been individuals who seem to have a remarkable ability to bring together information that most of us wouldn't see. We might just look right over it.

I think of a couple of instructors that I remember from Ambassador College who were **outstanding**. They just were able to bring things together and bring things to life in a way that others were not necessarily able to do. In fact, I think, specifically talking about the epistles of Paul, when we covered that at Ambassador College, we had an instructor who was very, very good at bringing out the details of Greek words and what this or that meant, and it really made the Scripture come to life. But at one point in the course of our study of the epistles of Paul, Mr. Les McCullough, who was the Deputy Chancellor in Big Sandy when my wife and I were there in college, decided that for the faculty, it would be good for them to switch around for a little bit and teach something different.

So Mr. McCullough came into the epistles of Paul class to teach there for one of the books, specifically the book of Romans. I've never forgotten what an experience it was. Mr. McCullough didn't get into Greek words very much. He didn't look at that, but he had a wonderful big-picture focus on what's there, and it was a wonderful perspective, a different perspective, because the way he saw the book was not all detailed as the other instructor would, but instead: How do we apply this? What does it mean? How does it change the way we live our lives? I was always so impressed with that. In fact, most of us, when that period of time was over and our regular

instructors came back, many of us said: “I wish you could take this class twice, once with each instructor, because those different perspectives were so very helpful.”

[28:52]

Well, that’s kind of what I see in this verse about knowledge and wisdom. There are some people who have the ability to bring out things that others haven’t seen. And there are others who have this ability to say: “Okay, how do we live this? What does this mean in living the Christian life?”

Now there’s something else that I think we also should note here. It’s very easy to look over. You notice it doesn’t say: “To one is given wisdom, to another knowledge.” It says: *the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge*. In other words, this seems to have to do, not simply with having knowledge or wisdom, but having the ability to communicate. So God gives to individuals the ability to communicate His truth and how to use that truth.

He goes on to say: **verse 9** (another example) *to another faith by the same Spirit* (He’s emphasizing that.), *to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit*,

Okay. The Spirit of God in you and the Spirit of God in me is exactly the same Spirit. I don’t have a better Spirit than you, nor do you have a better one than me. We both received the same Spirit. But, that same Spirit gives to us different characteristics. It gives us different gifts.

Now, obviously, all Christians are supposed to have faith. But probably, if you know many people in the Church of God, you know that there are some people who just seem so rock-solid in their faith that when difficult times come along, it’s like: “I want to go talk to them because they help me be stable. They help me through the tough times.” We all go through difficult times, and those individuals who have a very strong, rock-solid faith can strengthen the faith for the rest of us.

What about this *gifts of healings*? I had an individual recently write me a question about this: “Is this saying that God gives to some people miraculous healing ability, and then for the rest of us, He says: ‘If you’re sick, go to the elders and let them anoint you?’ ” No. I don’t see there’s a division here in this. He simply is telling us that some people have the ability to help bring along healing in a way that perhaps others don’t.

I think when you’ve ever been in a situation where you’ve had to rely on—even people with—you’ve had a physical problem, and you have to rely on medical people. You understand that there are some people who seem to have an amazing ability to step in and help out in a very kind and caring way. There are also in every profession individuals who—they’re basically there to do a job and earn their money and go home. There are some individuals who seem to have a special ability to reach out to those who are suffering and help them.

[31:50]

I know when my mother was in the hospital before she died—she’d had a stroke—I was **so** impressed with the **quality** of the nurses who were there because they really helped her a great

deal. She wasn't just "another number," but they actually reached out to her. Now, I realize those individuals were not converted; they were not changed by the Spirit of God in that particular situation. But there are individuals who seem to have a unique ability to reach out in that way. And I think that's a part of it.

We also, of course, should recognize that healing is not always confined to the physical. It doesn't mean this individual has a unique ability to perform some miraculous physical healing, to heal broken bones or cuts or things like that. You know, it sometimes involves the heart and mind as well. And there are individuals who seem to have a unique, compassionate, understanding ability to help an individual who is going through a tough time.

Now, are there people in the Church today who have this physical ability? Yes, I could name some names of individuals that I know of, that I believe God has given a special compassion and understanding, and maybe even a greater ability when it comes to that physical healing aspect. But I also know those who have a unique ability to help to heal the heart and mind.

Think of all the individuals that you know down through the years who've lost loved ones—a mate, a child, a parent. It's painful. And for all of us, when something like that takes place, there's a lot of support and encouragement and sympathy that comes very quickly. But, all too often it goes away very quickly too, and it's not there, and people continue to need that.

I remember a wonderful elderly lady that my wife and I were able to know in one Church area. Her husband died, and they had been sharecroppers. They had never had a great deal, but they'd been sharecroppers. They were both converted people. The husband died, and she had children, and they were in the area, and there was a certain support. But she missed her husband so very badly. And I remember after a year or so, we were visiting with her, and she said—well, there had been some people who were trying to comfort her, and they asked her: "Well, have you kind of gotten over your loss?" And, she responded: "No, you never get over it. You just learn to move on with it." And I think that's an important concept.

[34:24]

There are some people who are able to help you move forward, to still be there after the initial rush of comfort and encouragement. I think that's a special gift from God. And so that's a part of the healing as well—to help people heal from the pain of loss of loved ones who've died—all of those things, as well as the physical. It isn't an alternative way to have physical healing. That, I think, is a point to understand. The instruction in **James 5** tells us: "You're sick. *Call the elders*; be anointed; ask God's intervention and help." And that's true for all of us.

Now, if God chooses to do an amazingly miraculous healing—wonderful! If He chooses to take a while—okay, it's still a healing. This isn't some alternative thing to say: "Go to the elder if you can't find someone who has a special gift of healing." That's not the point. We simply recognize that God may give some individuals an increased ability to help in both physical and emotional ways.

He goes on: [**1 Corinthians 12:10**] *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.

All kinds of different gifts that are described here—or at least mentioned here. Were these gifts that were part of the Corinthian congregation? Probably so. There were probably individuals with each of these unique characteristics. Remember there tended to be, because of this pride, this kind of an approach—at least among some in Corinth—of: “Well, I think I may be a little bit better. I think maybe I’m a little more special to God because He gave me **this** gift.” And Paul is saying: “No. All of those gifts are there.” And he tells them: “You didn’t come behind any other congregation in the gifts that God provided for you. They’re there, but it’s not intended to be something that makes one better than another. It’s all the same Spirit producing this.”

Now, what do we mean by *working of miracles*? God does miraculous things. But you know, sometimes—and I think it’s true for all of these things—sometimes what takes place is behind the scenes. Sometimes it’s something that you look back later and you say: “You know what—that was miraculous.” I’ve had that happen.

I remember one particular case—I won’t go into the details—but where a lady was having a **very** serious health issue. In fact, she was about to die. And she was in a hospital, and we prayed; we asked God’s intervention. I anointed her, and her problem went away. Neither one of us—the lady or I, either one, realized how serious the situation was. But the next day a nurse came in and said: “Wow, what I saw yesterday was a true miracle!” And, we were surprised. Looking back on it, we realized: “Well, yes, that’s exactly what happened! God **miraculously** intervened in this particular case.”

[37:26]

Now I wish I could say that always happens when I anoint someone. It doesn’t. God has chosen to do certain things at certain times. But, there are all kinds of miracles that can take place. Many of you have had miraculous events in your own lives. Perhaps it had to do with the job. It had to do with protection. It had to do with a blessing that came your way. God does all kinds of miraculous things. And God has sometimes worked through certain individuals to bring those things about.

He talks about *prophecy*. Now, again, I want to look at that. The word here is *prophēteia*. It means “to speak forth.” *Louw & Nida* says:

An utterance inspired by God; the capacity or ability to utter inspired messages.

So often when we use the word “prophecy,” people think in terms of “prediction,” a prophecy about what’s **going** to happen. But the word itself really doesn’t necessarily involve prediction at all. It means “something that is inspired by God.” Even when we look at the words—not included here—but, for example, back in **Matthew 24**, where Jesus Christ in the Olivet Prophecy talked about *false prophets*, the word was *pseudoprophētés*. And it had to do either with someone who falsely claimed to be inspired by God, or it could relate to somebody who was inspired, but inspired not by God but by some other source. And they would then be a *false prophet*, a

pseudoprophétés.

Now, when we talk about the word *prophecy*, it really does mean “to speak under inspiration.” Let me give you just a few quotes. *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* says:

The mention of the gift of prophecy seems to include an ability to give insights into, and to convey the deeper meanings of God’s Word.

Another one, which is a word study book, *Vincent’s Word Studies* says:

Not mere foretelling of the future. Quite probably very little of this element is contemplated; but utterance under immediate divine inspiration: delivering inspired exhortations, instructions, or warnings.

Barclay says it this way:

It would give a better idea of the meaning of this word if we translated it “preaching.” We have too much associated prophecy with the foretelling of what’s to happen. But at all times prophecy has been far more (about) **forthtelling** than (about) **foretelling**.

So he tells us that God gives to some people the ability to give a message inspired by God. Have you ever sat in services and heard something that you thought was especially inspired? I think many of us have. There may be times when we’ve sat there and said: “You know, what they just said is **exactly** what I was wondering about this week.” Or: “It was a question I had, and now I have the answer.” And you cannot help but say: “I wonder if God inspired them to say those words.”

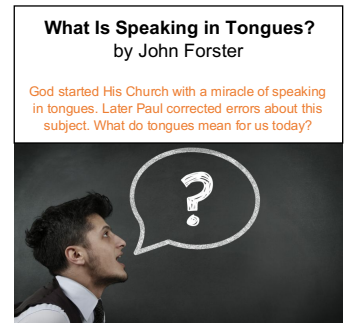
[40:36]

Those of us who speak in front of the congregation have many times found ourselves saying something that wasn’t in our notes. I’m not saying we’re standing there and suddenly we lose consciousness and go off and words come tumbling out. No. That’s ridiculous. That’s not it at all. But as we’re talking about a subject, ideas come to mind that we hadn’t thought about before. Is God behind that? Yes, sometimes I believe He is, because He wants His people to understand His truth. Does that make the speaker a wondrous person? No. We’re still common, ordinary Christians, just like everyone else. It’s the same Spirit providing that for each one. So he says: “Yes, He gives the gift of *prophecy* or inspired speaking.”

To another the discerning of spirits. This can be taken a variety of ways. Can it refer to individuals who are especially sensitive to recognizing a false influence from Satan? Hmm, perhaps. But it also can simply be a reference to attitudes. There are some people who are quick to recognize the attitude behind speaking. That doesn’t necessarily mean it’s a negative attitude, a bad attitude. It may be a very good one. There may be times when a person expresses himself or herself in a way that comes across a bit harshly. And yet, the person who is perceptive may be able to recognize: “You know what? They said that in that way because they were hurting, because they’ve been through something very difficult. It’s not the normal

way they would be. It's not that this person is an antagonistic or sarcastic person, but they've been through a trial." We need to understand that. Some people are able to perceive that.

The last two he talks about here: *to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues*. I don't want to get into that right now because I want to save that for when we get to **chapter 14** that specifically deals with the subject more deeply. But again, it is not someone standing around, and suddenly, almost without control, they're babbling away. That's certainly not what Scripture is talking about. We're talking about known languages. We're talking about the ability to speak in another language which we haven't really learned at that level, or the ability to understand at a different level. And as I said, we'll talk more about that as we get to that.



But I'd like you to at least, perhaps, in preparation for **chapter 14**, go to *Life Hope & Truth* and read this article, even download it for yourself. [What Is Speaking in Tongues?](#) It's a very, very helpful article. It explains things very well, and I think it sets a good foundation for us as we go forward.

[43:23]

He does tell us through this verse that God does give people extraordinary abilities where language is concerned. And I think we'll be able to illustrate some of that for you as we move into that in the next class. Well, let's move on here today.

[1 Corinthians 12] verse 11. He again makes the emphasis: *But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He (God) wills.*

God is the one who determines what gifts each individual receives because God knows what each of us needs. He knows what the body of Christ needs. And He knows—based upon the mind, the character, the personality that we have—He knows what we're capable of doing, and He can build upon that. But it is that same Spirit.

In one sense, it's like—we need to understand he's telling us here: God doesn't just have this big bag of gifts, and He looks out at His people and grabs a handful and just kind of throws it out there. No. It's not like, you know, grabbing candy from a piñata. It's a special selection by God. He, along with Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, who obviously knows what the Church needs, make decisions about: "What's best for this person? This congregation needs this. Who can we give this gift to?" And they make specific decisions. *He* is the one who *wills* what's going to take place here.

Verse 12 *For as the body—*

Now we begin to draw the metaphor that he's going to use for most of the rest of this chapter.

12 *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.*

Jesus Christ is the Head of His body, the Church. **Colossians chapter 1** makes that even clearer than here, but it makes the point. Now, again, when you stop and think about this, God could've made us very differently than He did. But He made this amazing body that we have.

Remember what David said in **Psalm 139** and **verse 14**? He says:

*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul (my life) knows very well.*

When you stop and think about the incredible complexity and interrelatedness of everything in the human body, it is just so completely amazing! And the more we learn, the more we come to recognize that, to see that the complexity is awesome. And David saying: *I am fearfully and wonderfully made*—what would David say if he knew some of the things that we know today?

[46:30]

I look back on the time when I was going through high school, back in the early 1960s. And, going through a biology class, one of the things that students would normally do is to draw a picture of, let's say, a plant cell—a typical plant cell, and a typical animal cell. You remember how simple those pictures were? We would have for an animal cell kind of an oval in a membrane that holds it in, and there would be a nucleus. And in the nucleus we might know there were chromosomes and certain things there. We were only beginning to understand about the DNA and all that goes into that, the wonderful complexity that's incorporated there. But most of that cell we would just kind of call "protoplasm."

Today we know there's a wonderfully complex makeup that goes into that. There are parts of the cell that transport nutrition. There are parts that transport waste and move it out of the cell. And the complexity is just **mind-boggling!** The more we look at it, the more we are amazed. What would David have said if he could have begun to know all of those things?

I came across an interesting quote from Dr. Linus Pauling. Dr. Pauling is a Nobel Prize laureate, and he makes the statement—he said:

"Just one living cell in the human body is more complex than New York City."

Dr. Pauling knew what he was talking about. And yet we are composed of literally **billions** of cells, and the body replaces them, does all kinds of things with them. The abilities, the unique aspects of every part of our body—it's just so inspiring! And God had to create all of that. Intelligent design is the **only possible** way to explain all the complexity that goes into making us what we are.

Verse 13 He says: *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**.*

He keeps coming back to this concept: "Do you really think you're special? Oh, you get to stand in front of the congregation, and I've given you the gift of inspired speaking—that's wonderful. Does that make you more important than the widow who has the ability to comfort and

strengthen the hurting person? No, because frankly, that may be a more important thing at certain times.”

[49:16]

So he says: “We all are brought into *one body*. We’re not separate bodies here.” We don’t live in different sections, and somehow, well, you know, we could just cut off part of the body and everything would be fine. The rest of us will be okay. That part doesn’t really matter. No. All the parts of the body matter, and all have been made to drink—all of those different functions we get are as a result of the Spirit of God, and it’s all the same Spirit.

*For (he says in **verse 14**) For in fact the body is not one member but many.*

And we look at it, and we see one body, but it’s amazingly complex.

15 *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, of course, we would say: “Well, of course not. It’s all connected.”

16 *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?*

Well, no. We wouldn’t look at that and say: “Well, the ear doesn’t really matter.”

17 *If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?*

In other words, Paul addresses certain of the characteristics that we have, the senses that we have. The five human senses are amazing all by themselves. Just to study any one of them is just absolutely amazing. I read something the other day that made the comment that our eye, by which we see, is really an extension of our brain because we really don’t see here in the eye. That’s just the mechanics of what is processed and sent up to the brain. And up here is where we see—in the brain. The ear is an extension of the brain. Our sense of touch, our sense of smell—all of those things are extensions of the brain.

[51:07]

When it comes to how you and I received knowledge—I was looking this up because I was curious:

- 83 percent of everything that comes into us to perceive comes through our eyes.
- 11 percent comes through our ears.
- Three and a half percent through our sense of smell.
- One and a half percent through our sense of touch.
- And one percent through our sense of taste.

Which of those senses would you be willing to give up? Well, we really don’t want to give up any of them because all of them have a tremendous impact on the quality of our lives, our ability to

enjoy life, to experience things. Would you give up the sense of taste? Well, think of how boring eating would be—food, that aspect of life. Or, if you couldn't taste, but you could still smell, it would smell good, but nothing there. We don't want to give up any of those senses.

Now, what's Paul's point? All of the senses are important. Yes, 83% comes through your eyes. Your eyes are very important, but so are all the rest. So is the rest of this.

Continuing on here: **verse 18** *But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.*

He chose where we should be. He decided where in the body He wanted us to serve.

And he says: **19** *And if they were all one member, where would the body be?*

We're a giant foot, a giant ear? We couldn't function.

20 *But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.* **21** *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 just think, the eye saying to the hand: "I don't need you." Okay, what happens when I get an eyelash in my eye? I am really glad I have a hand to help me get it out. We need that; we need each other. We function in that way.

Verse 22 *No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.*

When you begin to examine the body in detail, you think about, for example, our inner organs, our internal organs. Well, most of them are not all that impressive as far as how they look or their structure, how strong they are. What about your liver? Oh, that's pretty floppy tissue, and it's not really something that has its own inherent strength. If it weren't for the body being designed the way it is, so the liver is protected, it wouldn't be able to function at all. But, do we want to function without a liver? No, the liver is an extremely important part of the body.

Now you don't see it. You don't walk up to your friend at Sabbath services and say: "Hey, Bob, how's your liver been this week?" No, we don't think in those terms. But you can count on the fact that Bob's liver has been doing a great job this week or Bob wouldn't be there, and neither would you. Those things that take place in private or hidden away, they're extremely important. And that's true in the Church as well.

[54:12]

*And those members of the body (he says, **verse 23**) which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty,*

There are parts of our bodies that we cover up and adorn ourselves with clothing because we don't want to walk around naked. That's not the way we should be. But, again, those parts are important. They function; they carry out important aspects of our lives. I don't want to spend the time on it now, but, a few years ago I was—I don't remember how I got led to it—but I started looking at an article about how the human bladder works.

Now, if there's any organ that probably most of us are not wanting to put on display for everyone to see, it's our bladder. But what an amazing design goes into a structure that is designed to hold and discharge waste! It's amazing how God has designed us. And likewise in the Church, there may be individuals who serve in the background, but God honors them. Their service is important.

He says: **verse 24** *but our presentable parts* —

Like our face, our hands, our arms—those things that people see. We don't need to adorn those or hide them or put them away in any way.

—But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,

God designed us in that way.

Verse 25 *that there should be no schism (no division) in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.*

God doesn't want us ever to be divided as His people.

Verse 26 *And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*

Again, this is true for the body. We could give all kinds of examples. If you stub your toe, your ears know your toe was stubbed. You feel it all over. If you taste something that's especially nice, that you enjoy—maybe a piece of fresh fruit or something that's cold and wet and delicious after a hot day—your whole body enjoys that. And so God is saying that when we're the body of Christ [and] one part of us suffers, we all feel that. We should. It's intended to be that way. We're supposed to care that way for each other. We can't just ignore it. And likewise, when people are blessed, that should be something we share, we're a part of.

[56:50]

Verse 27 *Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.*

Okay, we are collectively the body of Christ, and individual members who are there.

And he says, in **verse 28**: *And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.*

God has given all these different gifts to the Church. We need to keep some things in mind. Those given these gifts also have a greater responsibility and accountability. And second, God is the one who places different people into those responsibilities as the need arises. He's not obligated to fill all of those offices that we've just read about—apostle, prophet, and so on—at all times. When the **need** is there, He fills the office. But if there's not a need, that's okay. The body still functions because God provides the body what the body needs.

Verse 29 He says: *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of*

miracles?

Obviously not. God doesn't give that same responsibility to everyone.

30 *Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?*

And again, obviously the answer is "No."

31 *But (then he says) earnestly desire the best gifts. —*

Yes, you may not know exactly what the best gifts are for you. But to go to God and say: "Please give me the gifts that are needed to serve your people" is a proper thing to do. There's nothing wrong at all with you going to God and saying: "Please give me gifts—spiritual gifts—that will enable me to serve the body more fully, even if that service is completely behind-the-scenes and no one knows it but You and me, God. Please help me to do that."

And then he finishes this chapter with a fascinating phrase. Yes, desire the best gifts—nothing wrong with that.

—(But) *I show you a more excellent way.*

What is that? There's something better than desiring the best gifts? Sure is.

I'm going into that in our next class. Hope you'll join us then.

[59:13]