

## A BACKGROUND INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS

**Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. (12:1-3)**

This passage introduces the section (chaps. 12-14) that focuses on spiritual gifts, a controversial subject today within many parts of professing Christianity. This is one of the most interesting, important, and controversial areas of scripture. Perhaps no area of biblical doctrine has been more misunderstood and abused, even within evangelicalism, than that of spiritual gifts. Yet no area of doctrine is more important to the spiritual health and effectiveness of the church. **Apart from the direct energizing of God’s Spirit, nothing is more vital to believers than the ministry of their spiritual gifts, their God-given endowments for Christian service.**

**As we study this we will give great care to supporting each position because this is bedrock foundational to the life and ministry of the church of Jesus Christ. So, it is critical that we understand this.**

**Contrary to the thinking of many people, the true church of Jesus Christ is not a visible human organization run by a hierarchy of officials.** Some think it is a social agency to meet the needs and demands of the community. Others think it is simply a convenient place in which to be married, buried, or baptized. Some people think the church is nothing more than a religious social club in which people of like-minded beliefs and standards get together for fellowship and occasional service activities.

**The church, as established by Jesus Christ and described and defined in the New Testament, is a living organism. It is the spiritual body of Christ, who is its Head, its Lord.** It is the fullness of Him that fills all in all. The Church is not a human institution. And, it is not an earthly organization. It is an organism, and as such it is eternal. The church cannot die.

**It is a supernatural organism, created, established, empowered, and led by the Lord Himself.** Because its Head is eternal and indestructible, the church is eternal and indestructible. Its members are believers who have been given eternal life. Jesus assures us that even “the gates of Hades shall not overpower it” (Matt. 16:18). **The church is indestructible, eternal and supernatural. As such, it is an organism.**

### **IT’S SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER BECOMES MANIFESTED IN MANY WAYS:**

- We worship a supernatural God.
- We believe in a supernatural intervention into human history in terms of the revelation of the bible.

- We believe in the supernatural intervention into human history of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We believe in a supernatural Holy Spirit Who indwells us.
- We are the result of a supernatural transformation that has made us new creatures.
- **We have been given by the Holy Spirit a supernatural endowment of gifts by which we can minister within the organism to the building and edifying of that church until it comes to the fullness of the stature of Christ and has a powerful witness in the world. THAT'S THE CHURCH!**

**Every member of Christ's church has been given supernatural endowments, gifts of God's Holy Spirit, which through the Spirit are God's divine means of ministering His Word and power among His people and to the world. They are God's supernatural provision for the edification of the church and the evangelization of the world.** They are the means through which believers are to grow worship, witness, and serve.

**THAT IS WHY WE MUST UNDERSTAND SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND IT IS WHY WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT SATAN COUNTERFEITS THEM. He counterfeits them because he knows that they are absolutely vital to the function of the church.**

**THE CHURCH IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT.**

**THE CHURCH IS NOT PROFESSIONAL PULPITISM FINANCED BY LAY SPECTATORS WHO SIT THERE AND WATCH IT HAPPEN.**

**THE CHURCH IS A LIVING BREATHING ORGANISM THAT FUNCTIONS AS LIFE AND BREATH, AND IT IS FUNCTION ON THE BASIS OF THE MINISTRY OF EACH MEMBER WITHIN THAT CHURCH TO MINISTER TO THE OTHER. And that's why it's seen as a body, and every one of us is like a member of that body. We have a function in harmony and symphony with every other member.**

**So, it's critical that we understand how it works, how we operate within it, how the Spiritual Gifts function in order that the church might be built up.**

**And we need to know how to recognize Satan's counterfeits and know that the end result of these will not be to build the church up, but rather to tear it down.**

**There is some "tearing" going on today and we want to make sure you understand the distinction.**

**NOW THERE ARE MANY QUESTIONS CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS, AND IT IS OUR PURPOSE TO ANSWER THEM AS WE STUDY CHAPTERS 12,13, AND 14.**

**WE MUST USE THIS SESSION TO DEAL DEEPLY IN DETAIL WITH AN INTRODUCTION OR YOU WON'T KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING.**

**WE'RE GOING TO VERSE-BY-VERSE DEAL WITH HISTORY, GRAMMAR, AND CONTEXT. Those who attended the series on "How To Study The Bible" will recognize the techniques we'll use to get at the truth of this matter.**

**SOME OF THE QUESTONS WE WILL BE ANSWERING ARE:**

1. What are spiritual gifts?
2. How many are there?
3. Does every believer have them?
4. How do I get them?
5. Can I seek certain gifts?
6. How do I understand the purpose of gifts?
7. What about miraculous gifts like languages and healing – are they still in operation?
8. How can a person know which one or ones he has?
9. What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit and how does it relate to spiritual gifts?
10. Does every Christian possess the fullness of the Holy Spirit?
11. Are all the gifts still in operation? If not, which ones, and how did they cease, and why?
12. What is the gift of languages?
13. What is the gift of healing?
14. Can the gifts be counterfeited and, if so, how can believers tell the true ones from the false?
15. What is the most important gift?

**NOW REMEMBER THE SITUATION OF THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH BECAUSE THAT IS BASIC TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE WHOLE PICTURE HERE.**

**WE WILL USE THE NORMAL PROCESS OF HISTORICAL, GRAMMATICAL INTERPRETATION. WE HAVE TO KNOW:**

- **What was said.**
- **What was meant by what was said in the time in which it was said?**

**TO DO THIS WE MUST RECONSTRUCT SOME HISTORY.**

**Now you'll recall the Corinthian Church was established by the Apostle Paul during his second missionary journey. You can find that recorded in the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Acts. Paul spent 18 months there before moving on. They then had other pastors to come and minister to them, with some distinction.**

**However, not long after Paul left severe moral and spiritual problems developed in the Corinthian church. So, severe that this first letter to the Corinthians deals exclusively with these problems!**

**You ask, "Where did Paul find out about these problems?"**

The Corinthian church, like much of the church today, was seriously affected by counterfeiting as well as by misunderstanding and misuse of spiritual gifts. Some of the Corinthian believers recognized the problem, and 1 Corinthians 12-14 continues to answer questions about which they had written Paul (7:1). In addition to the problems raised and reflected in that letter, Paul had learned of other problems from "Chloe's people" (1:11) and from "Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus" (16:17).

**In response to the letter of chapter 7:1, and the information from the house of Chloe, and the report of these three men, Paul sits down to write a letter to straighten these problems out on paper so the church could straighten them out in actuality.**

**JUST TO REMIND YOU ABOUT SOME OF THE PROBLEMS...IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT ANY ONE CHURCH COULD MANIFEST ALL OF THESE PROBLEMS, BUT THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH DID.**

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

- They had divisions in every possible way.

- They were divided about human opinion.
- They were divided over human philosophers.
- They were divided over human wisdom.
- They human personality cults and cliques.
- They manifested carnality.
- They were sexually perverted so that in the congregation was both fornication and incest.
- There was worldliness – preoccupation with the things of the world.
- They were suing each other.
- There was rebellion against Apostolic Authority.
- There was a failure to discipline.
- There was marital conflict.
- There were conflicts among the single people.
- There was abuse of liberty.
- There was idolatry, selfishness, pride, demon worship.
- There was the insubordination of women.
- There was abuses of God’s intended roles for men and women.
- There was abuse of the Lord’s Supper.
- There was abuse of the Love Feast.
- **ADD TO ALL THAT ABUSES AND PERVERSION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS!**

**THAT’S THE CONTEXT IN WHICH CHAPTERS 12-14 WAS WRITTEN!**

**IT ISN’T ANY DIFFERENT THAN ANYTHING ELSE IN THE WHOLE LETTER. IT’S JUST RIGHT IN LINE WITH ALL THE OTHER THINGS THAT WERE GOING ON IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH.**

**Just as the Corinthians had perverted almost everything else, they also had perverted this dimension of their life.** This perversion, as the others, largely was due to ideas and practices they had dragged from their pagan society into the church. The old life continually contaminated the new. They had not separated themselves from their former ways and were still handling, in fact strongly holding on to, that which was “unclean” (2 Cor. 6:14-17). **They had dragged all this into the assembly.** Although they were rich and complete in spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 1:7), they were poor in understanding them and irresponsible in using them. **This was especially true in the use of the gift of “languages”, which in our day is called “tongues”. Biblically, the word is “languages.”**

**FURTHER, IN CORINTH, THE CONCEPT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT DOMINATED WAS CONFUSED WITH ECSTATIC, ENTHUSIASTIC (in the true sense of the Greek word) ACTIVITY.**

**FOR EXAMPLE:** Somebody who stood up and gave an utterance (language, prophecy, interpretation, or whatever) seemed to be more godly the more wild the utterance was. Therefore, the gift of “languages” became the one that was most exploited. The ecstatic speaking that went on was then given credence as the highest degree of spiritual maturity because it demonstrated the greatest manifestation of outside power. So they tended to lean toward that which was more bizarre and more wacked!

**THIS CARNAL CONCEPT WAS A REMNANT OF THEIR UNSAVED, IDOLATROUS DAYS WHEN ECSTATIC UTTERANCES MADE BY PAGAN PRIESTS AND WORSHIPPERS, UNDER THE CONTROL OF A DEMON, WERE THOUGHT TO BE THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.**

**That’s the kind of culture they lived in, and this had been dragged into the assembly.**

**In that age in which they lived when religion was connected with frenzy, ecstasy, and bizarre things, that kind of thing got dragged into the church and became a delusion regarding the work of the Spirit.**

**NOW IN THEIR CULTURE THEY HAD WHAT WE CALL THE “MYSTERY RELIGIONS.”** The mystery religions had as characteristics of their function these kinds of frenzies, and ecstasies, and enthusiasms that went on.

**It was easy for the Corinthians (in their carnal state), when these kinds of things entered the church, to confuse them with the true gifts of the Holy Spirit. And, this is exactly what happened.**

**IT ISN’T AT ALL SURPRISING. LET ME SHOW YOU WHY IT ISN’T.**

**In their church there were divisions. Where did those divisions come from?** They came because the Corinthians dragged in from the world the things that they had held to before they were saved.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** As was Greek culture, the Corinthians were enamored with “Philosophers.” They all sort of rallied around their favorite philosopher, and so they learned, in their culture, to have “PERSONALITY CULTS”. They would worship one philosopher as over against another. So when they came into the church, they did the same thing (Chapter 3:4) “I am of Paul. I am of Apollos. I am of Cephas. I am of Christ.” They created more “PERSONALITY CULTS.”

**IN THEIR PAGAN STYLE OF LIFE THEY ALSO IDENTIFIED AROUND DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHIES.** They used to argue philosophy. This was BIG thing in

Greek culture. It was sort of an intellectual stance. And when they got into the church they did just that. They argued about the words of human wisdom. Remember **chapter 2** Where Paul said “I didn’t come to you with human wisdom, and human wisdom doesn’t lead you anywhere. And the natural man with all of his human wisdom can’t understand the things of God.” Well, that’s what happened. They dragged all of their human philosophies and their human personality cults into the church, and so they polarized.

**PLEASE NOTE, ALSO, THAT THE NAME OF THE CITY OF CORINTH BECAME A VERB.** There was a certain thing identified with the city that it literally became a verb –to *CORINTHIANIZE*. This means “to go to bed with a prostitute.” When somebody thought of Corinth, that’s what they thought of because that’s the kind of culture they lived in. So what happens in the church? **They dragged that same morality into the church.** In **Chapter 5** you have a person who was having sexual relations with his step-mother. You’ve got people who are joining themselves to prostitutes in **Chapter 6.** **The same thing they had done in their pagan life, they dragged into the church.**

**PLEASE NOTE ANOTHER THING. A careful study of Chapter 6 yields the fact that the Corinthians loved to go to court.** It was kind of a sport to go to court and dialogue. So, when they became Christians what did they do to each other? **THEY SUED EACH OTHER!** Again, they dragged that same mentality from their previous pagan existence into the assembly of believers.

**ANOTHER THING WE SEE IN THEIR SOCIETY WAS A TERRIBLE DECLINE AND THE FOULING UP OF MARRIAGES.** **Chapter 7** deals with fouled up marriages in the church because you have the same problem here they dragged in from the world.

**IN CHAPTERS 8,9, & 10 WE SEE THEY HAD A TERRIBLE TIME ABUSING THEIR LIBERTY IN CHIRST. WHY?** Because they had come from an existential society where anything goes. And they came into the church and they started doing whatever they wanted no matter how it affected anybody. Paul said, “You can’t DO that in the church. You have to limit your liberty for the sake of another.”

**THERE WAS A FEMINIST REVOLUTION IN THEIR CULTURE. Women, in wanting to be like men and compete with men shaved their heads and walked around without a blouse on.** That came into the church too, and women wouldn’t wear veils in the church and wouldn’t be covered in the church, which (in that culture) was a symbol of femininity and modesty.

**EVERYTHING THAT WAS CULTURALLY A PART OF THEIR LIVES, BECAUSE THEY WERE CARNAL, MANIFESTED ITSELF IN THEIR CHURCH.**

**SO IF ALL OF THAT IS THERE WHY WOULDN'T WE ASSUME THAT THE PAGAN STYLE OF RELIGION WOULD ALSO MANIFEST ITSELF IN THEIR ASSEMBLY UNDER THEIR CARNALITY?** That is exactly what happened. The world's religions came right in, infiltrated the life of the church, and they began to do the things within the confines of Christianity with new definitions and new terms to try to make it look right that they were doing before they ever knew Christ and calling them "gifts of the Holy Spirit."

**LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THEIR PAGAN RELIGIONS.**

## **Pagan Backgrounds**

The pagan cults of Greece and Rome were part of what are commonly called the **MYSTERY RELIGIONS**. By Paul's time they had dominated the near eastern world for thousands of years and indirectly would dominate much of western culture through the Middle Ages and, to some extent, even until today. **We still have the remnants with us now operating in Europe and in the Roman Catholic Church all over the world.** There were many forms of the "MYSTERY RELIGIONS". They found all different categories and all different forms, but they could all be traced back to a single origin.

**TO SHOW YOU THAT I WANT YOU TO LOOK AT REVELATIONS 17:5.** It's discussing here the final form of world religion. **At the end of the tribulation, the true church is gone, and the world begins to establish a form of religion. They come together under one heading and verse 5 tells us what it is called.**

In his vision on the island of Patmos John was shown "*the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,*" on whose "*forehead a name was written, a mystery, 'Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth'*" (Rev. 17:1, 5). **Here the Lord pictures His judgment of world religion.** At the end of the Tribulation the true church will have been raptured (1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 3:10) and the world will begin to establish a religion of its own that will be truly universal. It will be the composite of all the world's false religions, which will "give their power and authority to the beast," the Antichrist (Rev. 17:13). **The final form of that all-powerful, universal religion will represent the completion of the mystery religions that historically originated in ancient Babylon.**

In its organized form false religion began with the tower of Babel, from which Babylon derives its name. The false religion that began at the Tower of Babel is the **MOTHER OF ALL OTHER FALSE SYSTEMS.**

**THE TRUE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE. THE FALSE ONE IS A HARLOT! SO THE FALSE RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS WERE "MOTHERED BY BABYLON.**

Cain was the first false worshiper, and many individuals after him followed his example. **But the Tower of Babel was man's first organized counterfeit of true religion.** Organized pagan religion began with the descendants of Ham, one of Noah's three sons, who decided to erect a great monument that would "reach into heaven" and make themselves a great name (Gen. 10:9-10; 11:4). **Under the leadership of the proud and apostate Nimrod they planned to storm heaven and unify their power and prestige in a great worldwide system of worship. That was man's first counterfeit religion, from which every other false religion in one way or another has sprung.**

God's judgment frustrated their primary purpose of making a grand demonstration of humanistic unity. **By confusing "their language, that they may not understand one another's speech," and scattering "them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:7-8) the Lord halted the building of the tower and fractured their solidarity. But those people took with them the seeds of that false, idolatrous religion, seeds that they and their descendants have been planting throughout the world ever since.** The ideas and forms were altered, adapted, and sometimes made more sophisticated, but the basic system remained, and remains, unchanged. That is why Babel, or Babylon, is called "the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:5). She was the progenitor of all false religions.

**From various ancient sources, it seems that Nimrod's wife, Semiramis (the First), apparently was the first high priestess of the Babel religion and the founder of all mystery religions.** After the tower was destroyed and the multiplicity of languages developed, she was worshiped as a goddess under many different names. She became **Ishtar of Syria, Astarte of Phoenicia, Isis of Egypt, Aphrodite of Greece, and Venus of Rome—in each case the deity of sexual love and fertility. Her son, Tammuz, also came to be deified under various names and was the consort of Ishtar and god of the underworld.**

**Tammuz corresponded to Baal in Phoenicia, Osiris in Egypt, Eros in Greece, and Cupid in Rome. Amazingly enough, this Cupid, or Eros, or Baal, or whatever you want to call him, was killed by a wild boar and 40 days later was raised from the dead? Do you want to know where "Lent" comes from? It doesn't come from the bible. It comes from the pagan celebration of Semiramis's mourning for forty days over the death of Tammuz (cf. Ezek. 8:14) before his alleged resurrection. Now that's part of the marriage between the Babylonian "Mystery Religions" and "Romanism"!**

**According to the cult of Ishtar, Tammuz was conceived by a sunbeam, a counterfeit version of Jesus' virgin birth. Isn't it interesting that clear back to the Tower of Babel that if the rest of the world didn't understand Genesis 3:15 Satan did! He knew there was a "seed of the woman."**

**So, here you have this very sophisticated religious system that spreads all over the world. When you come to Greece, they're going to know about it. They're going to be in the same thing, worshipping the same system, with some sophistication. They had all kinds of sophisticated rites, and rituals, etc.**

## **LET ME JUST GIVE YOU A FEW OF THOSE THINGS.**

- **The mystery religions originated the idea of baptismal regeneration, being born again merely through the rite of water baptism.** They believed that people were saved by being baptized in water, so they had systematic baptisms.
- They also believed in sacrificial systems, so they slaughtered pigs, and lambs, and dogs and birds. They had feasts and fasts.
- They believed in mutilation and flagellation to atone for sins or gain spiritual favor. If you wondered where that came from, now you know. It didn't come from the bible, but from the mystery religions.
- **Later on, historically, the whole Babylonian religious system moved to Rome! And, it was there waiting until the Church developed and married with it.**
- They also began the custom of pilgrimages, which many religions follow today.
- They believed in public confession.
- They believed in offerings and religious ablutions to pay for sins.
- They believed you had to give penance - that you had to pay for your sins. There was one of the mystery religions in Greece that said you had to go dunk yourself and hold yourself under ice cold water that was cut in a frozen lake to get rid of your sins. Another specified that you had to crawl so far on bleeding knees as penance for your sins. This is practiced right today in Roman Catholic churches in Mexico and the Philippines. Where did it come from? It came from this system that infiltrated Christianity via Rome!

**Now, among all these other things there was one thing that was characteristic of the mystery religions that found it's way into Greece and that was indulging in the practice of what they called "ECSTASY."** Now, "Ecstasy" is not what you feel when you kiss your girlfriend. Ecstasy was cultivating a magical sensuous intimate communion with deity. In other words you do anything you can do to get yourself into a type of hypnotic state where you would sensually commune with a deity and they assumed that was a union with God.

**LET ME QUOTE FROM THE WORK OF S. ANGUS WHO HAS A SIGNIFICANT BOOK ENTITLED THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS IN WHICH HE WRITES VERY OBJECTIVELY AS A HISTORIAN.** These things are not some obtuse discovery. These are normal routine well-known facts about these systems. We're going to take the time to read some of it because it's the basis of the mess that was going on in the church at Corinth.

(DESCRIBING ECSTASY) *"The person was brought into a mystic ineffable condition in which the normal functions of personality were in abeyance. And the moral striving which form character virtually ceased or were relaxed while the emotional and intuitive were accentuated."* (His brain goes into neutral and his emotions take over!) *"There states were ECSTASY AND ENTHUSIASM* (Enthusiasm in our society means something

different than it meant to the Corinthians. In our society it means giving all you have for something. The Greek term means it is a state of euphoria induced on someone so that they become semi-conscious.) *“Both of which might be induced by vigil and fasting, tense religious expectancy, whirling dances, physical stimuli, the contemplation of sacred objects, the effect of stirring music, inhalation of fumes, revivalistic contagion, such as happened in the church at Corinth, hallucinations, suggestion, and all other means belonging to the apparatus of the mysteries.”*

DO YOU SEE WHAT HE’S SAYING? THEY COULD INDUCE IT IN LOTS OF WAYS.

**(CONTINUING THE QUOTE)** *“These two kindred abnormal states of consciousness, often indistinguishable, are united by Proclus when he speaks of men GOING OUT OF THEMSELVES TO BE WHOLLY ESTABLISHED IN THE DIVINE AND TO BE ENRAPTURED.”*

SO THEY WERE ABLE TO DO THIS THROUGH THESE MEANS.

*“In ECSTASY the devotee was lifted above the level of his ordinary experience into an abnormal consciousness of an exhilarating condition in which the body ceased to be a hindrance to the soul. ECSTASY may be of a passive character, resembling a trance, or an active orgiastic of excitation resembling what Plato calls “DIVINE FRENZY”. According to the means of induction, the temperament of the initiate, and his spiritual history, ECSTASY might range anywhere from non-moral delirium to that consciousness of oneness with the invisible and the dissolution of painful individuality which marks the mystics of all ages.”*

**NOW, THAT IS A VERY IMPORTANT PARAGRAPH.** He’s saying there that in ECSTASY a person can go into all different kinds of responses in trance like ways.

For example, have you ever seen a guru that sits there with his legs crossed and goes into oblivion in trance-like ways? That’s a form of ECSTASY. And it can be created in the mind.

For example: The ultimate goal in the life of a Buddhist is to enter “NIRAVANA”. Niravana is where you sink into a state of total nothingness. You contemplate yourself out of existence. Such a total trance are you in that you don’t come out of it.

ON THE OTHER HAND, you have the whirling dervishes and the mad wild frenzy of ECSTASY that you see in other kinds of religion that ends up in orgies. This goes way back to Baal.

**YOU SEE IT TODAY IN WHAT IS NOW CONSIDERED “MAIN STREAM” CHRISTIANITY.** You see somebody who is “SLAIN IN THE SPIRIT” where they go flat out into a trance.

There are others who act very bizarre. They used to call them the “HOLY ROLLERS”, RUNNING UP AND DOWN THE AISLES IN A MAD FRENZY. And you see the stirring of this very kind of thing.

**(CONTINUING THE READING FROM S. MANGUS)** *“Further, in ECSTACY, in the freeing of the soul from the hampering confinement of the body, in it’s communion with the deity, powers arise within it of which it knows nothing in the daily life hampered by the body. It now becomes free, as spirit, to hold communion with spirits. Also, release from transiency it is endowed with capacities to behold what only the eyes of the spirit can behold, that which is removed beyond time and space.”*

**NOW LISTEN TO THAT! This euphoria creates a tremendously good feeling. And, people say “This is fantastic!” They would say they have communed with a deity. THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT PEOPLE TODAY ARE SAYING AND THEY ARE SAYING THAT IT IS THE RESULT OF CERTAIN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT! There conclusion is, “Well, I felt so good. I’ve never felt this way before! It’s got to be God!”** I know people who can stick cocaine up there nose, or smoke dope, and feel better than those people feel. That is NOT the criteria! There are drunks who’ve never been so happy! **But what happens is this artificial euphoria is created and then the assumption is made that you must have connected up with God.**

**IF YOU THINK THAT IS A MUST IN CHRISTIANITY, YOU BETTER KNOW THAT IS THE SAME FEELINGS THE PAGANS GOT WHEN THEY DID IT THERE WAY TOTALLY APART FROM ANYTHING GODLY!**

**FURTHER SAYS ANGUS,** *“The condition was one of ANESTHESIA, unconscious of pain or of anything hostile or disconcerting in the surroundings.”*

Have you ever noticed somebody who goes to a healer with terrible pain who walks away feeling nothing, only a day later, to be in agony again. This happens because there is created a euphoric anesthetic response from the mind. These people usually are told that they began to doubt and not fully claim the healing and that’s why the pain returned.

**(CONTINUING FROM ANGUS)** *“There is ample evidence that the Bacci (adherents of the cult of Bacchus – marked by orgies and wine drinking) were insensate to pain and endowed with supernatural strength. So where the priests of Seville and the priestesses of Mah. This anesthesia to pain is a religious phenomenon known in all ages, especially in great revivals and in many forms from that of the Indian Yogi, on to martyrs who’s ECSTACY took away the terrors of agonizing death by imparting miraculous fortitude.*

*We may assume that the semi-physical semi-psychic state was much coveted by the initiates. To be lifted above sense, to behold a beatific vision, to become incorporate in god was the end sought in ECSTASY, and the satisfaction sought or derived was of various kinds – physical, sensual, aesthetic, and intellectual.”*

**“ENTHUSIASM WAS THE KINDRED STATE OFTEN ACCOMPANYING AND CONFUSED WITH ECSTASY.”** Under ENTHUSIASM were included by the Greeks, all forms of mantic (magical formulas) prophecies, soothsaying, revelations and dreams, and visions, such revelations being the direct utterances of the deity. In all forms of ENTHUSIASM there is the same underlying idea, that God is involved.”

**\*\*NOW YOU SEE THOSE TWO THINGS MADE UP THE SYSTEM OF RELIGION IN WHICH THE CORINTHIANS HAD LIVED AND GROWN.** Now, when they became believers, it was very much like them, because they were not “spiritual” but “carnal”, to manifest the same type of behavior religiously, as they had dragged every other dimension of the world into their assembly! So, their kind of religion was ECSTATIC, ORGYISTIC, FRENZY, CAOTIC, CONFUSING, AND Paul SAYS **“LET EVERYTHING BE DONE DECENTLY AND IN ORDER. AND LET IT BE DONE TO EDIFY”** And, in Chapter 14 he gives them rules to change the whole pattern of how they’re doing it.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Let’s say you’re a visitor in Corinth, and you say to your wife, “Wife we have the day. Let us go to the Church of Corinth and have our hearts blessed.” So you go to the First Church of Corinth, you go in, you’re right on time, but all the rich people have already been there for an hour and have finished the LOVE FEAST. There’s nothing left for you or all the poor, who are just arriving because they had to work later than the rich. The rich are over in the corner eating the food real fast so there won’t be anything left for the poor at the Love Feast. You go in and you notice they’re not only gluttonous but **THEY’RE STONED! THEY’RE BOMBED! THEY’RE DRUNK! THEY’RE OVER THERE HAVING A TERRIFIC TIME!** And all the poor people are sitting on the other side with their stomachs growling and you’ve got a GREAT DIVISION! And then somebody brings up a certain issue and they argue about it, and they hassle about it! And the drunks are loud and obnoxious. And you’re saying to your wife, *“This is a funny church we’re in.”*

Then somebody says, “It’s now time for the LORD’S SUPPER.” And they abuse it. They drink too much of it and they eat it up, because the poor haven’t had anything yet! And it turns into a mockery. When that’s done, they go into the regular service and everybody stands up and starts yelling and hollering and talking at the same time, and people are speaking in ecstatic utterances, and somebody’s trying to give a prophecy, and some over here are singing a song. And you say, *“Whoah! This is incredible!”*

THEN THEY GIVE YOU THE LITTLE BROCHURE THAT SAYS “WELCOME TO THE FIRST CHURCH OF CORINTH.” And, if you happened to have an unbelieving guest he would go away saying, “*These people are crazy! They are mad!*”

**THAT’S EXACTLY WHAT WAS GOING ON AT CORINTH, AND THAT’S WHY CHAPTER 11 VERSE 17 SAYS, “*When you come together it is not for the better, it is for the worst.*”** It’s a mess! So, here they all are in this wild crazy frenzy carrying on. Paul’s got to straighten it out.

**One of the reasons I believe the true gift of languages is just that “languages”, NOT ECSTATIC BABEL, is that God would never give a gift that would be the same as Satan uses. That’s just one among many other reasons.**

**SO GREEK RELIGION INVADED THE CORINTHIAN ASSEMBLY AND THE CORINTHIANS WROTE Paul A LETTER AND THEY SAID, “*Would you please tell us how we can tell what’s good and what’s bad, who’s what, and what’s going on? We’ve lost it.*”**

**ILLUSTRATION:** I read a book by the “Happy Hunters” (leading proponents of the Charismatic movement) and I’ll quote from it. “*When someone stands up and gives a divine utterance we know one of two things. It is either of God or it is not.*” **THAT’S NARROWING IT DOWN TO TWO!**

Well, that’s exactly where the Corinthians were. “*How can we tell? Things have gotten out of hand! We can’t tell anymore!*”

**WELL, THE FULL ANSWER IS GOING TO TAKE US THROUGH CHAPTER 14 AND ALL OF IT WILL COME TOGETHER.**

**SO HERE THEY ARE IN CORINTH, A CITY FILLED WITH PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES AND ECSTASY, AND ENTHUSIASM, AND SOOTHSAYERS, CLAIMING DIVINE INSPIRATION. AND IN THE CHURCH THEY’RE CARNAL AND CARNALLY DRAGGING ALL THIS MESS IN THERE! AND THEY’VE ABUSED IT ALL THE WAY TO IT’S LIMITS!**

**Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.**  
(12:1)

Paul’s use here of **Now concerning** was much like saying, “Now in the second place,” the first being mentioned in 11:18. Just as the Corinthians had been abusing the Lord’s Supper, they also had been abusing their spiritual gifts.

As indicated by italics in many translations, **gifts** is supplied by the translators to indicate a word only implied in the original. The Greek (*πνευματικός*) literally means “spirituals, or spiritualities,” referring to that which has spiritual qualities or characteristics or is under spiritual control. Because the masculine and neuter forms of the word are the same, it can indicate either spiritual persons or spiritual things. **Some interpreters have taken it to refer to spiritual persons, in contrast to the unspiritual and carnal ones about whom Paul has been saying so much.** But the context makes it clear that the reference is to spiritual *things*, specifically to “gifts” of the Spirit (12:4, 9, 28, 30-31). **The same word is used in 14:1 (cf. v. 12), where it could not possibly refer to persons.** Except in Ephesians 6:12, the word spiritual is always used in the New Testament of that which is in some way related to the Holy Spirit.

Paul wants to make sure that the Corinthians have a clear and complete understanding of their **spiritual gifts**, the special equipment for ministry that the Holy Spirit gives in some measure to all believers and that are to be wholly under His control and used for Christ’s glory.

After the harsh words he has just given about abusing the Lord’s table (11:17-34), Paul again assures the Corinthian believers that he considers them to be **brethren**, his spiritual brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. They were not acting spiritual or acting like Christian brothers, but they still belonged to Christ.

Paul was deeply concerned that those brethren have a proper understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit, especially in relation to His gifts to them. He uses the same phrase here (**I do not want you to be unaware**) that he used in 10:1 concerning the experiences of Israel in the wilderness under Moses. It was an idiomatic phrase often used to introduce an exceptionally important subject. Paul used it to encourage his readers to pay close attention to a critical truth (see Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Thess. 4:13). The Greek *αγνοεο* / literally means “not to know” or “to be ignorant of.” **It is the term from which we get agnostic.** Paul wanted the Corinthians to have no ignorance and no doubts, no uncertainty or agnosticism, about the identification and use of their spiritual gifts. The church cannot function, and it certainly cannot mature, without properly and faithfully using the gifts God gives His people for ministry. Satan will try to counterfeit the Spirit’s gifts, and he will try to induce believers to ignore, neglect, misunderstand, abuse, and pervert them. Consequently, Paul’s teaching here is critical.

**The apostle assured the Corinthians that it was possible for them to know the truth about spiritual gifts and that he was determined to teach them.** He therefore proceeds to tell them how to determine which gifts were true and godly and which were counterfeit and satanic. Because they misused the true gifts, he also tells them how to use those gifts properly.

All the gifts are given to the church to build up God’s people into the image of Christ its Lord. In Ephesians Paul speaks of the specially gifted men who are given to the church “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (4:11-13). Christ indwells each

believer (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16) and He indwells the church (Eph. 2:22). Individually and corporately the church represents Christ. Spiritual gifts are the Lord's primary channel of making Christians become Christ in the world, His visible and manifest body.

*Spiritual gifts are divine enablements for ministry characteristics of Jesus Christ that are to be manifested through the body corporate just as they were manifested through the body incarnate. Each gift the Holy Spirit now gives to believers had its perfect expression in Jesus' own life and ministry. His church continues to live out His life on earth through the power of His Spirit working through His gifted people.*

Because it seemed supernatural and because it was dramatic and often bizarre, the practice strongly appealed to the natural man. And because the Holy Spirit had performed many miraculous works in that apostolic age, some Corinthian Christians confused those true wonders with the false wonders counterfeited in the ecstasies of paganism.

Ecstasy (Greek, *εκστασια*, a term not used in Scripture) was held to be a supernatural, sensuous communion with a deity. **Through frenzied hypnotic chants and ceremonies worshipers experienced semiconscious euphoric feelings of oneness with the god or goddess.** Often the ceremony would be preceded by vigils and fastings, and would even include drunkenness (see Eph. 5:18). **Contemplation of sacred objects**, whirling dances, fragrant incense, chants, and other such physical and psychological stimuli customarily were used to induce the ecstasy, which would be in the form of an out-of-body trance or an unrestrained sexual orgy. **The trance is reflected in some forms of Hindu yoga, in which a person becomes insensitive to pain, and in the Buddhist goal of escaping into Nirvana, the divine nothingness.**

**Sexual ecstasies were common in many ancient religions and were so much associated with Corinth that the term *Corinthianize* meant to indulge in extreme sexual immorality.** A temple to Bacchus still stands in the ruins of Baalbek (in modern Lebanon) as a witness to the debauchery of the mystery religions.

**A SIMILAR FORM OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE WAS CALLED ENTHUSIASM (GREEK, *ενθουσιασμος*), WHICH OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BUT WAS DISTINCT FROM ECSTASY.**

Enthusiasm involved mantic formulas, divination, and revelatory dreams and visions, all of which are found in many pagan religions and philosophies today.

# The Importance of Spiritual Gifts

## The Source of Counterfeit Gifts

**You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led. (12:2)**

**Pagans** translates *ετηνε* /; which commonly was used to represent all non Jews, that is, Gentiles in general. But in the New Testament the term also is sometimes used, as here, to refer specifically to non-Christians (cf. 1 Thess. 4:5; 1 Pet. 2:12).

One of the chief characteristics of most pagan religions was idolatry. As former pagans, the Corinthian Christians had once been **led astray to the dumb idols**. **Led astray** (*απαγο* /) was often used of prisoners being taken under armed guard to prison or execution (Mark 14:44; 15:16; Acts 12:19; cf. 2 Tim. 3:6). Before a person is saved he is a captive of Satan and of his own depraved nature. He is spiritually blind and spiritually weak, and cannot help being led into idolatry.

One of the most common misconceptions about the ungodly life—a misconception shared by many immature believers—is that it is free, in contrast to the Christian life, which is hemmed in by rigid restrictions. As Paul teaches in this passage, just the opposite is true. The unbeliever is a captive of sin and of Satan. He has some choice as to the type of sin, but he has no choice as to whether or not to sin. **However you were led**, the apostle says, you were led. You had no choice. Whether you went into idolatry willingly or not, you could not help it.

I often think of a man to whom I have witnessed for many years. Each time I ask him to believe in Christ and confess Him as Lord he says, in one way or another, “I would become a Christian, but I don’t want to give up my freedom. I don’t want to be restricted. I want to do what I want.” I have shared with him 1 Corinthians 12:2 and other texts that teach the same truth. I remind him that all unbelievers are “slaves of sin” (Rom. 6:17), that they are not free at all. But he is convinced that he is doing entirely what he wants and refuses to give up his delusion.

Unbelievers not only are bound but blinded. They cannot see their chains. They live “in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart” (Eph. 4:17-18). Unbelievers think they are free because they are “deceived,” unknowingly “enslaved to various lusts and pleasures” (Titus 3:3). It is true, of course, that most people are quite content to be in sin; they like it and want to stay there (John 3:19). But the point is that, even if they wanted to do so, they could not escape.

Part of the unbeliever's bondage is to the worship of false gods, which even the atheist and agnostic have. They can no more keep from worshipping their sophisticated idols of various sorts than a primitive tribesman can keep from worshipping his carved fetish. Each is a slave of sin, **led astray to the dumb idols, however** [he is] **led**.

**Dumb** (*απηρο / νοσ*) does not mean unintelligent but speechless, literally "without voice." No idol can respond to man's needs. By definition an idol is manmade and impersonal. No idol, primitive or sophisticated, can answer a person's questions, give him revelation, assure him of truth, forgive him of sin, or endow him with dignity meaning, and peace. Just as no unregenerate person can help being led into some form of idolatry, no idol can help being **dumb**. Whether or not a demon is behind it (1 Cor. 10:20), an idol is totally helpless to benefit the one who worships it.

Tragically, many of the Corinthian Christians had fallen back into some of their old idolatrous beliefs and practices. They could no longer distinguish the work of God's Spirit from that of demonic spirits, God's true spiritual gifts from Satan's counterfeits, or true worship of God from the perverted worship of idols. They forfeited God's blessing and received none from their dumb god

## The Test of Spiritual Gifts

**Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.** (12:3)

Satan spends a lot of time in church. Nowhere is he more anxious to pervert God's people than where they are worshipping. Some members of the church at Corinth apparently became so fleshly and confused, and their worship so paganized and frenzied, that they even allowed the Lord to be cursed within their own congregation. Paul rebukes the entire church for allowing such ungodliness and for being so undiscerning about what is spiritual and what is demonic. He gives two principles, one negative and one positive, for testing the validity of gifts and their use. It is the first of several tests the apostle mentions in chapters 12-14.

### THE NEGATIVE TEST

The clear implication, as recognized by most evangelical interpreters, is that those who were saying **Jesus is accursed** claimed to be **speaking by the Spirit of God**. They actually claimed to be "speaking in the Spirit," manifesting some gift of prophecy or teaching, while cursing the name of the Savior and Lord they were supposed to be worshipping! **Accursed** (*αναθημα*) refers to severe condemnation. To say that Jesus is accursed is to condemn His nature, His character, and His work—not to mention His holiness and glory.

Paul tells the Corinthians that no such blasphemous utterance could possibly be **by the Spirit of God**. Nothing should have been more logical and obvious, but the Corinthians had come to judge the nature and use of gifts on the basis of experience rather than content. The more impressive, showy, unusual, and bizarre, the more a practice was accepted and respected. They had fallen back so deeply into ecstasy and enthusiasm that their judgment was completely warped. As long as it took place in the church and was presented by someone who claimed to be a Christian, any teaching or practice was accepted without question. Content was ignored, even to the extent of disregarding that which was obviously immoral and blasphemous.

It is possible that the person who called Jesus accursed was Jewish. Because the law taught that a person who is hanged on a tree “is accursed of God” (Deut. 21:23), many Jews considered Jesus to have been cursed by being crucified. It may have been that the apostle himself, as Saul the persecutor, had once urged Christians to blaspheme the Lord by saying, “Jesus is accursed” (see Acts 26:11).

But whether a person is Jewish or Gentile, his claiming to be a Christian and claiming that what he says or does is spiritual does not make it so. Paul hits them over the head with the obvious. Incredulously he asks, “How can you possibly be so confused? When you were pagans you could not help being blind and deceived. You could not help being led astray. But how can you who are truly Christians fail to recognize those who so obviously are not? How can you who have been so blessed with spiritual gifts be so utterly incapable of recognizing Satan’s counterfeit gifts? How can you even believe that cursing the Lord and Savior could be of the Holy Spirit?”

Only one thing seems to explain why such a wicked condition could have come to exist, especially in a church established and pastored by Paul himself. During the first century the philosophy of early-developing gnosticism was a great threat to the church. It taught that everything physical and natural is evil and that everything supernatural and spiritual is good. When adapted to Christianity it taught that the supernatural Christ only *appeared* to be the natural Jesus. The human Jesus was an imperfect, evil, and poor representation of the spiritual Son of God, who, because of His divine nature, could not possibly have taken on a physical form. Christ’s Spirit descended upon Jesus at His baptism but returned to heaven before the crucifixion. Therefore Jesus died an accursed death as no more than a mere man. So while glorifying the divine Christ the Corinthians may have felt perfectly justified in cursing the human Jesus.

Because they considered everything physical to be evil, Gnostics vehemently denied the idea of resurrection. The human body was the last thing with which they would want to be reunited after death. It is this part of the heresy that Paul so strongly challenges in 1 Corinthians 15. In the following chapter Paul states that it is the person who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ who is accursed (16:22-24). Some manuscripts do not have “Jesus Christ” in verse 22, but the two following verses show that the three names are inseparable. There is no Lord apart from Jesus and there is no Christ apart from Jesus. The resurrected, historical Jesus is the divine, heavenly Christ. A person who will not claim the

resurrected Jesus as Lord cannot claim the divine Christ as Lord. The incarnated Lord is the only Lord.

The heresy obviously continued to plague the Corinthian church for many years. “I am afraid,” Paul writes in his next letter to them, “lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully” (2 Cor. 11:3-4). The basic meaning of “simplicity” (*ηαπλοτε/σ*) is singleness, oneness. The Corinthians were still being led astray concerning the unity of Jesus and Christ. Some of the church members were still holding to false teachings about the nature of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the gospel. They had heard “another Jesus” preached and had received “a different spirit” and “a different gospel.”

The first test of a spiritual gift is doctrinal. If a person holds a derogatory view of Jesus Christ, then what he says and does is not of God. We should always compare a teaching or a practice with God’s Word. That is the test of its being of the Holy Spirit. A Christian today cannot receive new revelation. The only way to be sure if something is spiritual is to be sure it is scriptural. If it agrees with Scripture, a new revelation from the Spirit is unnecessary; if it does not agree with Scripture, a new revelation cannot be from the Spirit and is false.

## THE POSITIVE TEST

The second part of the test is also doctrinal and is simply the reverse side of the negative. **No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.** Paul is of course speaking of sincere confession. An unbeliever can easily utter those words. Jesus warned, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). True confession is based on true faith, of which obedience to God’s Word is the true mark. Confessing Jesus as **Lord** means nothing unless it involves affirming who He really is and obeying what He commands. One whom we do not really know and obey cannot truly be our Lord (Luke 6:46).

The title **Lord** (*κυριος*) implies deity. *Κυριος* and its Old Testament Hebrew counterpart (*αδωναψ*) are often used in the Bible as terms of respect shown to people of high rank or distinction, much as we use “your honor” when addressing a judge. But they are also used in a unique way of God. Because Jews considered God’s covenant name (Yahweh, or Jehovah) to be too sacred to say aloud, it was instead spoken as “Lord.” The custom is reflected in many translations by the use of capital and small capital letters (LORD) to render the Hebrew *ΨΗΩΗ* (Yahweh).

The early church soon came to reserve *κυριος* entirely for use in referring to God. Confessing **Jesus is Lord**, therefore, was always understood as confessing Jesus as God. A Gnostic may have confessed Christ as Lord, but he would not have confessed Jesus as Lord.

**Lord** implies sovereign authority. There is overwhelming biblical evidence that the word means rulership. If the **Lord** is creator, sustainer, and controller, He obviously is sovereign. Thomas's words, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28) must mean more than deity, or "my God" would have been sufficient. In Romans 10:9-10, confessing Jesus as Lord indicates His sovereign rule, because the context (v. 13) includes a quote from Joel 2:32 (Greek Septuagint version), where the Greek *κυριος* translates the Hebrew *יהוה*, which means sovereign authority, and is most often rendered in English as LORD. In the use of "Lord" in Acts 2:36, the context again gives us insight; verses 34-35 are from Psalm 110:1, where the Hebrew *אדון* means sovereign rulership.

The term **Lord** is used about 700 times in the New Testament ("Savior," under 10 times). The lordship, deity, and sovereignty of Jesus Christ was and is central to the true faith, and such affirmation is the work of the Spirit.

What a person truly believes about Jesus Christ is the test of whether or not what he teaches and does is **by the Holy Spirit**. The Holy Spirit always leads men to ascribe lordship to Jesus Christ as one indivisible and divine Person, to be obeyed completely. That is the testimony of the Father (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 5:26-27, 36-38; Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:20-21; Phil. 2:9-11), of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26; 1 Cor. 2:8-14; 1 John 5:6-8), and of Jesus Himself (Matt. 16:27; 26:64; 28:18).

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