

AN EXPOSITION OF FIRST CORINTHIANS TWELVE to FOURTEEN

(Complete Series)

by Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.

1988

<u>Lesson</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Passage</u>
1	Groundwork for Understanding Spiritual Gifts	I Cor.12:1-3
2	Basic Facts About Corinthian Spiritual Gifts	I Cor.12:4-7
3	The First Four Corinthian Examples of Spiritual Gifts	I Cor.12:8,9
4	Expectations of Miracles	I Cor.12:9b-11
5	The Church: Unified <u>and</u> Diversified	I Cor.12:12-19
6	Depending On One Another	I Cor.12:14-30
7	Paul's Priority Principles for Spiritual Gifts	I Cor.12:27-31
8	A Better Way to Do Ministry	I Cor.12:31b-13:7
9	A Quality of Cosmic Proportions	I Cor.13:8-13
10	Developing Edification	I Cor.14:1-5
11	Tongues: The Least of Corinth's Gifts	I Cor.14:6-19
12	Applying Edification	I Cor.14:20-25
13	When We Come Together...	I Cor.14:26-33
14	The Roles of Men and Women In Worship	I Cor.14:34-40

1 Cor. 12:8-11 1 Cor. 12:28 Rom. 12:6-8 Eph. 4:11 1 Peter 4:11

word of wisdom	apostles	prophecy	apostles	speaking
word of knowledge	prophets	service	prophets	service
faith	teachers	teaching	evangelists	
gifts of healings	workers	exhortation	pastors	
working of miracles	of miracles	giving	teachers	
prophecy	helps	leadership		
distinguishing	administration	showing of		
of spirits	kinds of tongues	mercy		
kinds of tongues				
interpretation				
of tongues				

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 12: 1-3

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 1 4/17/88

GROUNDWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Introduction If you would have asked me five years ago, "What one issue do you think you will face in Bible study and ministry most often?" I would have thought it might be marriage and the home, or predestination or personal relationships. All of those issues are things the Bible has much to say about--but the one issue about which there seems to be the most discussion and confusion today, is *the role in which the Holy Spirit plays in our lives*. Specifically, Christians are agitated about the matter of spiritual gifts. SOME of that agitation is founded in the way Christians are dealing with each other ("You've got to have THIS or THAT gift to be spiritual," or, "You've got to exercise your gift according to MY agenda...") But some of the restlessness Christians are experiencing about spiritual gifts, is due to the Church's rediscovery of the fact that there are such things as spiritual gifts in existence. Christians WANT TO KNOW how God has "graced" them, and how they are to use those abilities in walking with Him. It is not social pressure which compels them to find out what God's truth is for them on this, it is GOD'S SPIRIT inside of them which compels this search...

If you have no yearning inside of you at all to come to understand how God's Spirit works in believer's lives, then I would exhort you to ask yourself if you're really saved. As weak as the yearning may be, it will be there (I believe), in the heart of the person who has genuinely met Christ.

Over the next several weeks, we are going to undertake a verse-by-verse exposition of the twelfth through the fourteenth chapters of the apostle Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth. We will deal not only with spiritual gifts, but also with a number of important concepts and principles about church life. If you are fairly young in your spiritual growth, it will be good for you to walk with me through these chapters. If you have been a Christian for some time and have indeed grown in the faith for years, it will be profitable for you as well--even the most mature Christians need refreshment of their perspective on the church.

It is also quite possible that you have been a Christian for YEARS and have never yet really become confident about what your spiritual gift is, or how to use it. If that is the case then I am praying that THIS SPRING and SUMMER, the matter will become settled for you.

The Context of Chapters 12 to 14

So before we begin to examine, piece by piece these often talked about chapters, we need to say something about chapters 12 to 14 in the CONTEXT of chapters 1 to 16. No biblical text should ever be examined OUT OF its context. I have often heard preachers say,

"A text without a context is a pretext (an excuse)."

Paul's letters to the churches were written to real people. And those real people were involved with real-life problems and tensions even as Christians. Paul's letters reveal what many of those problems were and how to bring the power of the Holy Spirit to bear ON those difficulties.

Although First Corinthians is the longest of Paul's letters, it is also one of the easiest to think through. The first nine verses of the book are its introduction, and in verse 9 is a real key verse in the book, in fact, a *KEY VERSE* for your whole Christian life...

God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now that is the whole purpose of the Christian life--to learn to walk day by day, moment by moment, in the fellowship of the Son of God. That is where strength comes in the Christian life; that is where godliness comes; that is where love, grace, peace and joy are released to us.

After the introduction, Paul then goes into a long section that carries us clear through to chapter 11--to deal with carnalities, the things that threaten and hinder fellowship with Jesus Christ. There were a lot of them in the Corinthian church, just as there are a lot of them in modern American churches, but they can be gathered under three main headings:

PRIDE: which is a spirit of self-reliance, which wants to leave God out on the fringe of my life and handle everything myself. It is the deadly enemy of Christian faith and yet so many are controlled by it.

Then he deals with a second major area, and that is,

LUST and its problems. Lust is not a problem that was invented in the 60's. It has always raged within men and women and the people of God are not now, nor ever have been immune.

Then Paul dealt with LIFE AND ITS DANGERS and Paul says that the Christian life is to be lived *right out in the midst of danger*; that we are not able to HIDE ourselves from dangers, but we are able to HANDLE the dangers in a way that will enable us to resist the temptations and to glorify God. One of the kinds of trouble that we live our Christian lives in the midst of, is the trouble of dealing with other Christians. In churches, even though they're populated by God's people, things don't always run smoothly. The Corinthians were struggling specifically with several questions about WORSHIP, and with some of those questions Paul deals in chapter 11.

Let me offer a little encouragement to you, dear ones...Yes, there are spiritual pitfalls, snares and traps out there folks. But each day that you go to bed at night and still are able to say, "Thank you Lord--I still love you; I thank you for this day that I made it through still wanting your will," is a day in which God WAS glorified in your life--you don't have to move mountains just for God to have been honored in your life...

Verse One

That brings us to chapter twelve, where the apostle now turns from the "carnalities" to the "*spiritualities*." Actually Paul uses a very interesting word--he wants the Corinthians to fully understand what the story is about "*the spirituals*", or as your translation probably reads, "the spiritual gifts," although he does not use his usual word for spiritual gifts, *charismata* (he uses *pneumatikon*). Probably though Paul is thinking about the ecstatic goings on over in Corinth, which I believe were more prevalent there than in most of the other churches.

At any rate, the Corinthians were having more problems than they were blessings from these mystical abilities. No doubt they were coming from God and therefore were good, but like many of God's graces came to be misused by the recipients.

That should not be hard to relate to... If a Christian or a group of Christians has a significant amount of money, it is because God has blessed them--but they do not always use that blessing in the best way. The same was happening in the case of spiritual gifts in Corinth.

It is amazing to me how quickly interest is aroused when you introduce a discussion on the gift of tongues. Immediately, the question seems to sprout in the back of people's minds, "Does she or doesn't she?" We shall come to that gift in due course of these chapters, but first there are some other things that are very important...

First, Paul is not only concerned about the operation of supernatural activities in the church at Corinth. Apparently he believed that some of their problems were due to the presence of false teachers who preyed on the immaturity of the young Corinthian Christians. Right at the outset, he thought it necessary to confront any in the Corinthian assembly who might contradict his message. This is the underlying reason for verses 2 and 3.

Verse Two

Many of the Corinthian Christians were fresh out of a pagan background. Do you think of yourself as a former pagan? Unless you were raised under the sound of the Bible, at least in part, you indeed were a pagan. It is not an insult. It just means, today as it did then, you were not raised in a home where the true God was worshipped and served. Almost all of us were pagans. And as pagans, the life-style was idolatry.

Now idolatry does not have to involve just the worship of images, although some of you may have some of that in your background too. What IDOLATRY is, is *ANYTHING WHICH THAT BEGINS TO POSSESS US, that EXERCI-*

SES CONTROL OVER US, that BEGINS TO SHAPE OUR THINKING, that DEMANDS OUR TIME. Another definition of idolatry that I like is, "anything which replaces Christ on the throne of my life."

Idolatrous possession can be almost anything. It can be sports, or many other kinds of recreation, politics, music (which is a form of idolatry in my own past), art, science, food, drink, cigarettes, cars and many other things or IDEAS. The Corinthians, as you and I (if you have indeed trusted Christ), were set free from the power of those things when they trusted Christ. They had been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light--and there were various supernatural manifestations of the kingdom of light which the Corinthian church had an abundance of--the "spiritualities." Man is indeed subject to other spirits besides the Spirit of God. Paul wants the Corinthians to be aware of the dangers of idolatry. There are several MARKS OF IDOLATRY in religious organizations:

1. It almost always involves a personality cult. Some leader lifts himself up as the focus of all interest and attention and the followers find themselves slowly giving more attention to the leader than to his message--even if they are Christian leaders.
2. It involves some degree of regimentation and control. In order to enforce the personality cult there have to be certain demands made, certain limitations imposed, certain rights must be given up and the personality wields such influence that the followers forfeit their liberties VOLUNTARILY.
3. Then there are usually certain claims of special and unique powers. Every group needs to feel that they have a unique mission, a special authority that marks them as different than other groups. That claim then becomes the mark of an idolatrous kind of SOLICITATION for the followers money.
4. The final mark of religious idolatry is that (contrary to the Holy Spirit) it always creates unending jealousy and strife. The group is torn by constant dissension, infighting, arguing, struggling for control, cutting down one another--a complete absence of the main thing which God intends to mark a Christian assembly: love and affection for one another.

Now in contrast to all that, the apostle helps us to recognize the true mark of the Spirit of God at work...

Verse Three

The Spirit came into this world with one mandate: to exalt Jesus Christ! That is all He does. Everything the Spirit does aims at that goal and that point. And He will never do anything else.

Paul puts the mark two ways: negatively and positively. First, he says that no one can say, or INDICATE that "Jesus is cursed." It doesn't just have to be actually saying it that way, either. No one who speaks by God's Spirit will ever demean or diminish the centrality of CHRIST ion the Christian life or in the faith. Anyone who says, for instance, that Christ is nothing but a mere man is virtually saying that "Jesus is accursed," because according to Scripture the whole race is cursed--

everyone is BORN with that inner drive to be the center of attention, to live for self. Jesus was not bound by that curse--it was not at all in Him although He was fully a man in every other way.

Now positively, when the Spirit is at work He always seeks to exalt and magnify Christ as Lord. Jesus is in charge of all human events, NOW, not just when He comes back again.

"He is the one who holds the controls of history, and everything that is recorded in our papers today is moving at His will to a single point in history that He controls. That is what Peter declared to the assembled multitudes on the day of Pentecost, 'Him whom you crucified, God has made both Lord and Christ.' This was what made the early Christians so fearless: 'Jesus is Lord.' He is already in charge of those people [the Romans] who are giving us so much trouble, and He will see how far they go and determine what they do with us, therefore we don't need to be afraid. Jesus is Lord. THAT IS WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT EVERYWHERE MANIFESTS...even though today, you hear all kinds of voices everywhere denying that--"Science is lord; Sex is lord; Pleasure is lord; Feeling is lord; Money is lord..."

--Ray Stedman, Sermon on I Cor.12

Where the Spirit is at work, Christ will be glorified--it is the whole point of the passage. It is the whole point of spiritual gifts. It is the first item, in *bold, italicized* print, in CAPITAL LETTERS! Therefore a group that makes much of the Spirit is not emphasizing Christian truth. It is the group that MAKES MUCH OF JESUS, and that exalts Him and sees that everything should be (and IS) focused and centered on Him that will really manifest the Spirit of God.

As you and I seek to understand these chapters from I Corinthians, let's endeavor to be Christ-worshippers, and to really understand what the will of the Lord is. We will talk about the gifts. But let us not wander too far away from talking about the Giver of the graces, and WHY we have gifts--to honor a sovereign and gracious Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES FROM THE SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 12: 4-7

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 2 4/24/88

BASIC FACTS ABOUT CORINTHIAN SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Introduction When we are forming our convictions about spiritual gifts we should do so carefully, with consideration for all the voices that speak on the subject and most of all, with a complete submission to the MEANING OF SCRIPTURE. The first principle of deciding what I think about a subject should be TO LET THE BIBLE GOVERN MY BELIEFS, and not to determine what the Bible means, by what I have seen. As an evangelical Christian, I have determined to accept as PRIMARY, God's written revelation, and to interpret experience in light of that revelation. Jesus and Paul both used this methodology--Matthew 12:1-7; I Cor. 15:54, 55.

So, let us determine our beliefs about spiritual gifts upon what Scripture clearly says and also, let us decide to MAINTAIN SCRIPTURE'S PRIORITIES about the use of spiritual gifts. I know that there are many questions Christians are wrestling with about gifts--we shall deal with each in time. Now let's begin to pull out from our text some more basic facts about spiritual gifts... and we shall be looking at I Cor. 12:4-11.

FACT NUMBER ONE (12:4): Gifts are and always have been just that: **GIFTS!**
(Greek: charisma)

- They are evidences of God's kindness to His people.
- They are freely received, not earned as are rewards.
- They are for true Christians only, since non-Christians have not received the GREATEST free gift--redemption!
- They are not to be practiced with the same motivation for pleasure that we knew as pagans.
- Their purpose is to further the message and the reality of Jesus' lordship.

e: God's intent is not only that we contemplate His gifts to us, but **THAT WE FAITHFULLY USE THEM.**

Once there was a father and a son. The father loved the son and gave him many gifts. He went out and bought the son the finest "whatchamacallit" that money could buy, brought it to the son and with great delight, watched the son unwrap the "whatchamacallit" with shining eyes. Not long after, the father thought that the son would be useful a new "thingamajig." So he went out and found the best "thingamajig" on the market, wrapped it up and brought it to his son. "Surely my son needs one of these--I use mine all the time!"

12:8-1

of wisdom
of knowledge

healing
of miracles
by
signs
and
wonders
of the tongue
of prophecy
of discerning
of spirits

The son unwrapped the present, said, "Wow, Dad--neat!" And took the "thingamajig off to enjoy it." Again, in a short while it occurred to the father that his son would need an item that HE found eminently practical: a "whoshawhatsit." So (you got it!) off to the "whoshewhatsit" store he went, bought the one Consumer Report said was a "Best Buy" and anxiously rushed over to his son's house to give it to him. Again, the son was delighted--"Man, Dad, I've heard about these, and my friend Bill has one and I've been wondering how to get one!" And off he went, new "whoshewhatsit" in tow.

Not too long later the Dad stopped by the son's house but son wasn't home, but the door was unlocked. Dad thought he would just leave a note, and he went into son's house and started looking for a piece of paper. Son wasn't much a paper user and Dad couldn't find anything to write on, so he headed down-cellar. There, in a corner under the workbench, were the "whatchamacallit," the "thingamajig" and the "whoshawhatsit," hardly used, but covered with dust. How did Dad feel?

FACT NUMBER TWO (12:4) *A "spiritual gift" is a SUPERNATURAL ABILITY WHICH ENABLES THE CHRISTIAN TO PERFORM MINISTRY.* John MacArthur's definition is also good:

"Spiritual gifts are special capacities bestowed on believers to equip them to minister supernaturally to others, especially to each other" (Commentary on I Corinthians, p.290).

There is a difference between a spiritual gift and a natural talent. Non-Christians have many talents: art, music, science, carpentry, athletics, cooking etc. But non-Christians have no spiritual gifts because they have as yet rejected the *FOUNDATIONAL* gift: forgiveness and eternal life through the blood of God's Son.

Every Christian, on the other hand, has at least ONE gift, and many Christians possess several; indeed, a few believers possess many gifts. Let's look for a moment at Ephesians 4:7.

You and I need to remember though, that the purpose of having a spiritual gift, is to glorify the Giver, by using it to edify and build up the Giver's Church. The gifts, BY THEIR VERY NATURE, are tools whose only real value is in their usefulness to the rest of the Body who do not HAVE your particular gift.

So if you don't like being with any other Christians very much, or, if you've been hurt by other Christians, or you become disillusioned with churches and isolate yourself, ONE result is that your gift is made useless--on the shelf. Something of great value, designed and graciously imparted by God, is wasted.

FACT NUMBER THREE (12:4-7): *The truly spiritual ministries of a ASSEMBLY ALL have the true God as their source.* Churches tend to have all kinds of activities going on... Our task is to determine which kinds of activities are Spirit-born and indwelt, and which are just man-made

"churchy" activities. When you have composed the list, the activities which are spiritual in nature (things like worship, prayer meetings, teaching of the Word, counseling, meetings of encouragement and sharing, evangelism, etc.) really *COME FROM GOD* originally.

There is the same source when Hixville worships and when Cross Road worships. There is the same source when Grace Baptist evangelizes and when the Vineyard prays. There is the same source when Calvary puts together a meeting with a film designed to encourage her people, and when "IntNaz" puts on an Easter Contata. There is the same source when Jon Donner sings a song for you and Diane Corkum coordinates the nursery schedule... It's the same Spirit, Lord and God!

The best things that go on in Bible-believing churches all come from one place: the mind and heart of Jesus Christ. He is the well from which we drink and He gets all the glory, because He is the Lord.

In verse 5, the text reads "and there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord." The word for "ministries" is *diakonia* which means "service." It speaks not only of doing ministry, but the OPPORTUNITY to use that gift. It is Christ who gives us the opportunity to use the gifts, and if you seek Him about HOW, He will direct you. And when He does--even if, yes, you are a busy person--you can become aglow with excitement for Christ. The problem is there are multiple *thousands* of Christians who do NOT KNOW what their spiritual gift is (MacArthur's ideas for FINDING your gift are on the bulletin back today), or worse, many evangelicals today who are WEARY of all this spiritual-gift-talk, and don't even want to hear about the gifts any more because of all the division that has arisen about them.

FACT NUMBER FOUR (12:6) *When a Christian is blessed by another Christian exercising their gift, it is JESUS CHRIST WHO SHOULD receive the adoration.* This may seem to not need to be stated, but when God works in us through another believer, DISTRACTION is a temptation. "Preacher, that was wonderful!" "Singer, I was moved and I really think you're great!"

Again, remember that skillful singing isn't a spiritual gift, but I believe many Christians who are led to sing publicly, do so because they have the gift of encouragement and that is how they use it.

What is another pitfall with forgetting who is really doing the ministry in the Church, is the tendency to focus on the "up front" gifts or the ones that are often open and recognized, to the neglect of the "behind-the-scenes" gifts. Paul will have much to say about that later in this chapter....

FACT NUMBER FIVE (12:7) *Every Christian is supernaturally equipped to contribute some service by which ALL other members of the Body benefit.*

This verse has some background in the Corinthians' failings. They had become a divided church, with cliques and cells which were so rigid and partial that Jesus was not being honored by them. But to EACH REDEEMED PERSON, is given some EVIDENCE ("manifestation") of the SPIRIT for everybody to enjoy and benefit. I believe these manifestations were of two types (as the Apostle Peter seems to indicate; I Peter 4:11):

A. Speaking gifts; and B. Serving gifts, and perhaps some Christians are gifted under both categories.

In any case, ALL Christians, as the Gift-Giver intended it, were to enjoy and benefit. That means that not just THOSE WHOM WE CHOOSE TO USE OUR GIFT AMONG are to benefit. It means that we are to employ whatever supernatural enablements we find within ourselves FOR THE WIDEST POSSIBLE GROUP. If you are gifted in the area of "helps" let's say...

A list of all gifts mentioned in the New Testament is also provided on the bulletin back today--we shall deal fully with all those mentioned in I Corinthians 12-14 in the coming weeks.

...your strategy should be to use that gift in ways which benefit the greatest number of believers with whom you're associated.

Also, notice the term "good". Believers are to be blessed by spiritual gifts, not cursed, bored, insulted, intimidated, made to feel inadequate or jealous. If I am helped by your spiritual ability, I will derive good from it. I need your gift. The person in the pew needs your gift. God doesn't give the gifts as if they were "just dessert," nice but not necessary! HE GIVES THEM BECAUSE HE KNOWS WHAT WE NEED--HELP!

I need what you've got. You don't know what you've got? Well, would you please find out, because I need all the help I can get to make it through this world, and against the flesh and against the devil. And God has given you something that I need to make use of. Without your gift, I am impoverished, one strike on me already, weakened...

When I am concentrating on being helpful ("for the common good") it has another fringe benefit: it *distracts from the temptation to be destructive*. Things like gossip, bitterness, backbiting, being negative and critical, envy and so forth are not qualities, I am afraid, from which Christians are immune. If I am expending my energies looking for ways to use my gifts to help my brother grow in the faith, I have LESS TIME to be critical, to brood, to nurture grudges.

Dear ones, this can become a great church--it is a real good church, but we have the opportunity to become a great church in the sovereign Savior's eyes, by learning the IDENTITY, the OPPORTUNITIES, and the VALUE of our gifts. Let's be a worshipping church, by becoming a church uses its gifts for the glory of the Giver Himself, the Lord Jesus!

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 12:8,9

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 3 5/1/88

THE FIRST FOUR CORINTHIAN EXAMPLES OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Introduction When the Apostle Peter mentioned spiritual gifts, he mentioned only two, which leads me to believe he was really indicating that the spiritual gifts fall into two general categories: speaking and servicing (I Peter 4:11). That's sort of a "bottom-line" way of looking at the subject of spiritual gifts! You have those who seem best able to administer Christianity through talking, and you have others who are more able to administer Christianity by their listening and serving in other ways. The main thing Jesus Christ is concerned about is, are His people reflecting His love to each other? He gives each of them special capacities with which to do that, but it is more often a matter of DECISION, and to whether I'm going to put Christian love into practice in the Body of Christ. At this point, let me make an observation:

Its not when you don't need love, that you need someone to love you. Its when you're not very lovable that you need it... No, I haven't lost my senses! I am saying that it is when a church is in conflict that its members need to activate things like longsuffering, patience, acceptance and unbending loyalty. Its not in times of peace and harmony that a church needs the epoxy of love. Or, it is not in times of prosperity or safety that a church needs to activate the love of providing for one another--it is in times of danger and loss that the people of God need to "switch on" their special abilities to minister.

I think this is one of the reason American Christians are so confused about spiritual gifts--we are so insulated from really needing them in each other, that we afford ourselves the luxury of ARGUING about them, instead of using them as well-worn tools to build each other up...

Now today I would like to say two things about each of the nine gifts that Paul mentions. First, I am going to identify and define the gift, and then I am going to suggest its value for today.

First though, let's notice again the grammatical phrase that keeps popping up in the passage--its the "rope" which holds each of these nine gifts together, from a literary standpoint: "the same Spirit." Why does Paul keep making that point? Because the church at Corinth was divided. Churches today become divided too. Paul says, "EACH OF YOU IS UNIQUE,

WITH DISTINCT ABILITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS. BUT THE SOURCE OF POWER IN EACH OF YOU IS THE SAME--GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT. YOU SHOULD BE SO OVERWHELMED BY THAT FACT THAT YOU HAVE NO TIME TO WORRY ABOUT TAKING SIDES.

The application for us is this: there is diversity in Dartmouth Bible Church. That is OK. There are different kinds of personalities. Some are more talkative; others are very quiet. Some are naturally argumentative, others avoid "dialogue" like the plague. There are different kinds of interests: some like to talk about theology and doctrine. Others are more interested in outreach and ministry. Some like to worship with hands raised; others are intimidated by that and do not. That's OK. If Jesus sat in our assembly in the flesh, I daresay you wouldn't worry *too much* about how your brother or sister doesn't think or act of talk just like you do. In short, *ENJOY* the diversity among us and remember that you need to concentrate on *continuing to grow in grace yourself*. Part of that growth process involves adopting more and more of Jesus' commands into your daily practice. If you and I will do that, problems about spiritual gifts will be few and far between.

CORINTH HAD WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE (12:8) The Corinthian believers had both wisdom about God and knowledge about Him. More than that, they had "WORDS" of wisdom and knowledge. These spiritual gifts were revelatory occurrences in their assembly, where God spoke directly on various matters. We do not know the frequency that these utterances directly from God occurred. But we do know that *when* they occurred, they were not FOOLISH, RIDICULOUS or REDUNDANT utterances. No doubt the assembly would grow very quiet, and the utterance would have the integrity and authority and the "signature of God" about it.

The believers could not turn to their Bibles to check the utterance out--indeed the vast majority could not read, even if they had Bibles to check out. God knew this, and blessed them immensely with both pronouncements of DOCTRINE (knowledge) and APPLICATION OF doctrine (wisdom). He knew what the Corinthian Church needed and, being Jehovah-Jireh ("God will provide"), He provided the needed utterances.

No doctrine that God has revealed is irrelevant, impractical or useless. God does not waste words. The gift of word of knowledge is a revelation of DOCTRINE. The gift of word of wisdom is a specific APPLICATION of some truth, needed by the Corinthian church to better serve her Savior. The Spirit would distribute these abilities to certain individuals, *at certain times* and He did so because of certain needs.

APPLICATION FOR US: We need knowledge and wisdom too. I am not at all convinced that Scripture promises supernatural utterances of those things today, although I am convinced that the Holy Spirit will impart both knowledge and wisdom to every believer as he applies himself to the study of Scripture.

THAT is the bottom line, to me. Is Scripture sufficient? Are there not enough of God's words between the pages of the Bible to last me a lifetime? Why do modern Christians pine after further revelation? It will take me the rest of my life to learn the Book, as is.

CORINTH HAD THOSE WITH THE GIFT OF FAITH (12:9a) ...although the New Testament shows us no evidence that they were much being used in love as they should have been. "Faith" was an extraordinary determination to ask of God and to believe Him for it, even if it seemed impossible, even to the change of topography (13:2b)! Today it seems to be a relatively rare gift. But when someone is a real man or woman of faith, it has a wonderful effect on any Christians around the person. It rubs off!

I know a lady in North Carolina. She is about 70, and is not at all a flashy, "Look at me" person. But when Renée and I are with her, she often uses phrases like, "I believe God is going to..." She is a full-time volunteer worker for Wycliffe Bible Translators. She is not high-profile. She doesn't attend a big church, or even one you will likely ever hear of. She is not "great" in the judgement of world. But if ever anyone had the gift of faith I believe she does. It doesn't make headlines, but it pleases the sovereign God, and brings His power to bear on those things and people she lifts up!

For us, I know of no one in this assembly who practices an extraordinary level of trust and waiting on God to do things on behalf of this Body. We have many who assume, "God wouldn't or doesn't do *that*..." We have a few who enjoy a consistent prayer-life, I think; but we need a major re-energizing of BELIEF AND DEPENDENCE on the already-revealed promises of God. Either God has made a covenant with us, and honors it still, or He has not and we might as well all go out join the world...

CORINTH HAD THOSE WITH GIFTS OF HEALING (12:9b) It is interesting that Paul acknowledged the presence of gifts of healing--in the plural. It seems that there was some variety of the gift itself. One person may have had special ability to deal with leprosy; another with blindness; another with paralysis. Again, we have no indication of the frequency of these gifts. The text will not allow us to assume that each healer had the ability to heal *at will*. We simply do not know, but we can assume it was not rare.

Also the word "healing" is in the plural, and it should read "gifts of healings." There are different kinds of healings that are needed. There were all kinds of PHYSICAL maladies, and there were other kinds of healings needed too. The popular term today is "inner healing," seeing that many Christians are still walking around with crippling emotional hurts. Child abuse or neglect has a devastating effect on a little one. Just because he or she grows up and learns to MASK their hurts, doesn't mean they are not there. If I have learned anything in my years in the ministry, it has been a healthy respect for the depth and far-reaching implications of a troubled childhood.

As well, SPIRITUAL HEALING is sometimes urgently needed. This is where a true Christian has been injured or diseased in their faith. Their walk with Christ is sick. They need to be made well again.

Some believers were (and perhaps still are) gifted in such a way as to be able to RESTORE the hurting emotionally and spiritually. I have not seen the gift of physical restoration (cf. Acts 3:1-10), and I do not believe that in general, it is given today, because part of its purpose was to CONFIRM THE MESSAGE THE APOSTLE'S WERE BEARING. All the testimony we require today is this:

"Jesus loves me, this I know; for the Bible tells me so."

There is a very important principle of Scripture that we absolutely need to understand, if we are going to understand spiritual gifts (as well as many OTHER aspects of Christ's Kingdom)--and that is the TRANSITIONAL NATURE of the Church in the first century. All that happened then does not happen now. Indeed, all that happens now or shall in the future did not happen then! If you accept that Scripture teaches that God superintends HIS WORLD according to a planbook, and that the planbook has different chapters in it, you will see that just because we read about an event in Deuteronomy, doesn't mean that that same event is mandated for Acts. Just because an event occurred in Acts, doesn't demand that it occur in 1485 or 1988. Just because we read about certain YET FUTURE events in Revelation, doesn't mean we should expect them now, or read them into the past. > God has different ways of accomplishing the same ends, in different eras. This is central to really understanding the Bible as a whole, but unfortunately, many Christians have never been shown it...

I have kept my ear to the ground, so to speak, on all the rhetoric that is written on healing. Especially with the "Third Wave" movement writers, who (in my opinion) are much more biblically sound than our classically Pentecostal brethren, there is much to consider of their claims to the existence of a gift of physical healing. But even there I do not hear of healings of the drama that I read so consistently about in the New Testament. One of the appeals that Third Wave Christianity has for people, is that they address real needs. People really are hurting, and in many ways!

Now in general, the Third Wave movement is not abusive of those on whom healing has not taken place, though they have been prayed over. I am always angered when I hear a preacher say, "You're not healed because you don't have enough faith." In how many of Jesus' healings was faith even the issue? Few. More often, Jesus performed the healing to authenticate His claim to being Israel's Messiah!

Lastly, healing is a sovereign act by a loving God. He will do it when He chooses; not at the demand or incantation of one of His servant. I am convinced of this though, dear ones--He does still heal, and I believe He responds to the prayers of His people, though not always in

the way or on the schedule that we may demand of Him. We *do indeed* need to bring our prayer-lives more to bear on the needs of the ailing; the physically ailing, the emotionally ailing and the spiritually ailing!

APPLICATION FOR US: We definitely DO need to pray for healing, because God heals. But we need to do it biblically. James tells those who are sick to call the elders. I never get any calls to come pray for healing... And, we need to learn submissiveness to the will of the Lord; to PRAISE HIM for healings and to wait quietly and expectantly for them, but to accept His sovereign care of us, even if He does not supernaturally or immediately remove an illness.

We seem afraid to lift up those within the Body that we know are spiritually ailing, but we're real quick to bring up the physical needs of people no one in the Body even knows...

CONCLUSION As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, I see the great question in modern Christians' minds as "What is the proper role of the Holy Spirit in my life?" We are striving to know what to expect of Him, what to seek Him for, and what kinds of manifestations is He really showing today. All of us despise spiritual fakery; that is clear enough.

Dear ones, I assure you, the Spirit Himself desires more than WE DO, to empower our lives and exercise the Lordship of Jesus. I know that although we wrestle with confusion sometimes about HOW, He WILL bring to pass His will in us as we press on. Pressing on... that, after all, is our program. I desire to see you not become shipwrecked in the faith somewhere along the way-- The spiritual gifts that we do have here (and there are several), will help us to keep on course. Are you seeking your gift? May God help you and I to know it, and to delight in using it.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 12:9b-11

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 4 5/15/88

EXPECTATIONS OF MIRACLES

Introduction There is an underlying assumption of evangelical (Bible-believing) Christianity which permeates every day of our lives. We find ourselves depending on this theological assumption that we live with; we defend the assumption to the world; we get excited about the prospect of seeing this thing we ASSUME about God HAPPEN; to actually affect our daily lives... And further, we are jealous to guard this assumption from counterfeit imitations.

The assumption we make is this: GOD INTERVENES IN PEOPLE'S LIVES. He is completely able and willing to do so. That's what we pray for so often, isn't it? -- to help us out of trouble, to protect us from evil, to provide for our needs, and most significantly to see us safely to heaven. Don't you assume that God can and might intervene, when you PRAY FOR THE LOST? If you weren't assuming that, what would be the point of praying for the lost? If you are a true Christian, you DEPEND on the truth of that assumption and you live each day almost taking it for granted that your God cares, and that you can ask Him to INTERVENE in your life.

This "assumption" is reflected in verses like *I Peter 5:7* and *Hebrews 4:15,16* and *Philippians 4:13,19* and in so many other places.

The spiritual gifts we are looking at today are all supernatural abilities that some Corinthian believers possessed, granted by a God who was willing to intervene in that Church, to build it up and to authenticate it before a skeptical Greek society. Many of the spiritual gifts that the Corinthian church possessed were spectacular too. When a Greek seeker would encounter a Corinthian Christian, not many of whom looked like "successful" types (I Cor.1:26), that Christian would have a message on his or her lips, but no authoritative proof. You and I have our Bibles to which we refer. They had no Bibles. They had the reputation and the occasional PRESENCE of a select group of men personally commissioned by Jesus Christ--the apostles. But beyond that they needed some proof of the fact that their "good news" was real.

That is the primary reason behind the spectacular and profound abilities of some of their members--to authenticate this radical new message they bore, that anyone could come to personally KNOW and enjoy a relationship with Israel's God, the true God, the Living God, and that by

coming to know Him, the GRIP that their natural sinfulness held on them could be broken, through FAITH ALONE in the death and resurrection of Israel's Messiah, God's very Son Himself.

This all must have sounded pretty far-out to the average urban Corinthian. And so, God in His sovereignty, granted various abilities to perform supernatural signs. And they weren't signs like fireworks, pleasant to behold, but basically useful. They were signs that BENEFITED the people; which benefited the people in the name of Jesus Christ.

Healing was one of these signs. It was the ability granted to some to completely cure a disease or injury, by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in that disciple. Perhaps some were gifted to deal with only specific hurts and diseases. It may also have been that they exercised the gift only at certain times, rather than "at will." The Scripture does not specify the frequency that spiritual gifts could occur.

I am inclined to believe that the *SPIRITUAL GIFT* of healing is not generally in operation today, nor has it been since the first century. I am inclined to think the same about the other "sign gifts" mentioned in I Cor.12:10. I suggest two observations from Scripture for you to consider:

1. The complete lack of mention of spiritual gifts in any New Testament writing except I Corinthians, Ephesians and I Peter. *Romans & Acts.* In Ephesians only four gifts are mentioned, and Peter only mentions TWO, and I believe he was thinking of two categories of gifts rather than two specific gifts. If the supernatural sign gifts were generally present in all the ancient churches, *why are they not even mentioned?* Surely other assemblies would have run into the same kind of problems that the Corinthian believers had...

I believe the scarce mention of the sign gifts is because even then, they were something of a rarity. And by the end of the New Testament period, they were already expending their usefulness, as the body of revealed truth began to come together.

I know that for some Christians this line of reasoning makes no sense at all, because they choose to form their beliefs FIRST on experience, on what phenomena they see, and only THEN on the Bible.

2. Hebrews 1:1,2; 2:3,4 Whoever wrote Hebrews was writing near the end of the New Testament period (60-100 AD). He was writing to a community of Jewish Christians, some of whom were contemplating abandoning following Christ, and returning to "good old Judaism." At the beginning of the letter, the writer acknowledges that in the Old Testament God spoke, and revealed His word in many different kinds of ways and through many different prophets.

When Jesus came, all prophecy converged in one man, the GOD-MAN. Now, in 2:3,4 the writer says that Jesus' message (the Gospel) was spread by the apostles and confirmed by them. Finally in verse 4 he says that God backed the apostles up with signs and wonders, miracles, and with the gifts of the Spirit. All of this is in the *past tense*, leading up to the point of the whole book: *KEEP FOLLOWING JESUS! There is none better!*

To insist on the continued NEED for sign-gift authentication, is to indict the Scripture that it is somehow *insufficient* to prove Christ. My dear ones, it is sufficient for me.

But, I will also say this to you. If sign-gifts have in fact been off the scene (generally) for nineteen hundred years, as a technical enablement among the saints, *PRAYER has NOT been off the scene!* And God is still intervening in the lives of men, and in the life of the Church!

I believe God heals. I believe the Scripture "clears us" to pray for miraculous things, and to wait on a loving and powerful Savior to intervene.

My charismatic brethren who call ^{me} ~~us~~ to ask MORE of God, to really depend on Him to do it, and to PRAY more fervently, are saying some things I need to hear. And you do to. That is why I do not shield my ears from charismatic rhetoric; I listen to it.

That does not mean I'm going to buy into their whole program, excesses, errors, weak view of the sufficiency of Scripture and all.

I have never babbled in public, (and called it the gift of tongues, at least.) I have never babbled in private (except on Mondays) and called it the gift of tongues. I haven't witnessed any kind of Biblical miracle (except conversion, and supernatural provision). I have never seen someone go up to a blind person, pray for them, and restore perfect vision. But I have been to many charismatic meetings. And I still go on occasion, because in general they are interesting, and I find the fervor for Jesus exhilarating!

I remember one prayer meeting I attended at Georgetown University in 1973. It was a Catholic charismatic meeting. I was moved, and excited. But with the leaders still wearing the garb of monastic aestheticism (which I believe is the same thing as the error of the Judaizers), and with them still participating in the hope of salvation through the sacraments, the main one being the Mass, which I am persuaded comprises a re-sacrifice of God's Son, and therefore an abomination to God... I am not going to endorse the whole movement, because some are beginning to rediscover the Scriptural practice of prayer. They need also to rediscover JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE.

Another charismatic meeting I attended about four years ago was in New Bedford. The singing was wonderful--as far as I was concerned it could have gone on a lot longer than it did! But while the rest of the service was pretty imaginative, and I suppose enjoyable enough for those who were members of that church, I was not at all convinced that what was being claimed to be from God's Spirit, entirely was. That was not because I want less of God's indwelling than there is to have--it is because I am not going to buy into everything someone says, just because I like SOME of what he says (or even MOST of it).

Now here is the bottom line for you this morning. What abilities do you bring to this fellowship? If you don't know, let's talk about it and start the process of finding out. If you don't want to know, or you don't care right now, then what you need is repentance, because God has enabled every member of the Body to function in some special and valuable way.

Discovering your spiritual gift is a PROCESS. I believe discovery is like most other aspects of sanctification, the gradual LEARNING, becoming aware of the issues, and the gradual SURRENDER to the Lordship of Jesus of myself. Here are some needs of this particular church:

1. Mercy and friendship. Most of the people in this building need a friend in Christ who is trustworthy, and committed to pray for them.
2. Children's ministry, and youth ministry. Its all fine and dandy to get cranked up about spiritual gifts for ME, but what about using your abilities to help and encourage our kids?
3. Basic "life-needs." Meals, transportation, help with painting, gutters, car repairs, baby-sitting. Can you do any of that?
4. Counseling. Can you listen, then go think about someone's difficulty that they have shared with you in confidence, pray for them faithfully, and then go back and share with them your thinking on their problem?
5. Administrative skills. A church doesn't run itself. A certain amount of administration is needful. A budget doesn't just materialize. You need a Barry Mingola and his crew to take the time to sit down and pray about it, and work it out.
6. Financial needs. Some people are especially enabled to give large amounts, or more frequently because they have a soft heart, and they are more blessed financially. I know a couple in Virginia who give \$10,000/year to their church, above and beyond their regular giving, to support that church's Christian school. Its not a well known practice--that's not why they do it. They do it because they love the Lord and His work.

Conclusion: Notice the end of I Cor. 12:11. HE is the one who gives the gift. We don't pick them out. I do not decide which one I am going to have. That's because Jesus is the Lord of His Church. He will build Dartmouth Bible Church as He sees fit. I think His schedule is faster than ours. I want to be on schedule. Let's not become complacent and satisfied with the status-quo, as too many church-people do, unfortunately. Let's you and I be like Paul, "...*forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I PRESS ON toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3: 13c,14).

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES FROM THE SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 12:12-19

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 5 5/15/88

THE CHURCH: UNIFIED AND DIVERSIFIED

Introduction I have developed a real taste for stories of the sea. lately I've been reading a book about a ship called the *Halibut* that sailed the seas during the Second World War, written by her former captain. His account of the interaction of the *Halibut's* crew, and their teamwork has been interesting to me. A ship's crew must be in absolute unity about the ship's operation. Everyone must know their particular job and must carry it out well. The lives of everyone else depend on it, especially on the kind of ship that was the *Halibut*. *Halibut* was an American submarine, and each crew member had his own special areas of responsibility on which everyone else depended. The engine room crew had to know their duties and the peculiarities of the diesel engines. The electronics crew were indispensable in the boat's mission, and also in the evasion of enemy anti-submarine forces. Those charged with navigation were no less expendable, for obvious reasons. Even the cooks were valued--when they could not function, meals were not available and the basic effectiveness of the whole crew suffered.

It was interesting for me to read that the author, Captain Gallatin, read a chapter from the Bible each morning. He wrote that one particular morning he was especially troubled in his reading in Job 15 when he came across verse 21... Fortunately the verse was not immediately relevant!

But *Halibut's* crew were not all the same kinds of people. Some were big strapping bruisers from the city; others were country boys. Some were from strongly ethnic up-bringing, others were basic "English-Irish-Scotch and Soda." Some were educated, others weren't. But the Navy had woven them into an effective team, diverse and yet dedicated to the same agenda. It is a good picture of how God intends His Church to function.

We of course, are not in the business of destroying anything. We are in the business of RESTORING HUMANITY through the message of REDEMPTION through Jesus' death and resurrection. Our mission couldn't be more opposite. And yet, the idea of unity and diversity in the same organization is the point of Paul's words for us today. Let's look at the next section of Paul's exposition of spiritual gifts...

Vs. 12,13 It is amazing HOW the Body of Christ works: the Body of Christ is another way of describing the CHURCH. It works like this. It has a lot of different kinds of people in it, but it is still one unit. It has

talkative people and it has quiet people. It has old and young. It has wealthy and it has dirt-poor! It has people who are thinkers, reflective types; and it has hard-working, laborers. It has those who struggle with insecurity and those who struggle with pride.

But they are all bound by one simple fact: they have all personally met the Savior. At some point in their experience, they all came face-to-face with their own lostness, and trusted in the Gospel message. They all were then PLACED INTO GOD'S FAMILY, THE CHURCH. That's what Paul says in verse 13. That placing into God's family is what occurs when a person first trusts Christ--he may not be fully aware that is what is happening. But nevertheless, it is! And Paul calls it the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Spirit-baptism is done BY THE SPIRIT. It isn't the same thing as water-baptism (Notice that there is no mention of water in the passage). It happens at conversion, not after.

You may (and should) be baptized with water at some point after conversion, as a public statement that you have trusted the Savior. You may join Dartmouth Bible Church, as a corporate member and I hope that all of you will be led of the Lord to express that kind of affection for the members here. But these things are not Spirit-baptism. If you are a Christian, you were not baptized into Dartmouth Bible Church. Water-baptized or not; church member or not, if you have personally trusted Jesus Christ then you have been PLACED into an eternal family of souls: an invisible family which Paul calls the Body of Christ.

Notice that at the end of verse 13 Paul says the Corinthian believers were "made to drink." It is not that the saints have been grabbed by the throat, and forced to drink unwillingly. His idea is that all the Corinthian believers have been given the Holy Spirit, thirsty for Him as all men truly are (whether they realize it or not). The Spirit is the agent in the world who is adding to the Church, not men's slick campaigns for church growth. It is the same Spirit that saved ME as that saved Jon. It was the same Spirit that saved Jon as that which drew and saved Martin Luther. It was the same Spirit that saved Martin Luther as that saved Glenn! It was the same Spirit that saved Glenn as that saved the Chinese farmer who heard the Gospel last week and trusted in Jesus. Its not a local program! Its a world-wide program, that spans all time!

Notice also that Paul breaks down two kinds of walls that were probably evident in the Church at Corinth: one is ETHNIC and the other is ECONOMIC...

It is a little hard for us, perhaps, to appreciate the barrier of being Jewish or not, imposed on Christians of Paul's day. It is not a distinction that exists in God's mind. A Christian is a Christian in His mind, regardless of what family he or she came from. But some Jewish converts made a big deal out of having come to Christ FROM Judaism. It would be like if a Kennedy came to Christ today! AH! What heritage! Surely that must get me the front pew in the church! No. If a Kennedy came to Christ, he came in the same way as if a Hitler came to Christ--through the blood of God's Son; by the agent of God's Spirit.

Ephesians 2:14 and 15 spells out the same thing. There is no room for ethnic prejudice in the Body of Christ--either for or against anyone.

And so folks, you see Paul's argument here: The Body is made up of all kinds of different people, but they are all indwelt by the same Holy Spirit. And that same Spirit is binding them together; equipping them to do His work, His "chores", as it were. He commissions you and I to BE CAPTIVATED with the same thing--building one another up and spreading the Good News. He has given certain special abilities to accomplish those same goals.

What this means for you and me is first of all, that I need to understand that God has chosen to make up the Church with these differences INTACT. He is not swirling us all around into one big "blorpy mess" like some sort of soupy paste--all the original ingredients long since disappeared! It is not conformity to each other that He is bringing about: it is conformity to Jesus Christ.

There is room for godly individualism in the Church. You can be you and not feel like you are out of line. That's what makes being in a good church such an exciting thing! I meet all kinds of people that I never would meet otherwise!

If I didn't involve myself with Christians, I would probably spend time with only a couple kinds of folks--the kinds to my liking. But I meet so many different types of people; it's exciting! I accept your background, even if its different from mine!

The other barrier that Paul implicates is economic. Corinth was settled about 100 years before Paul's time mostly by Roman ex-slaves and other poor folks. It was a Roman colony with a New Deal history. Starting from the ground up, these people had re-built this city and those who were still slaves were looked at disdainfully by those who had escaped slavery.

But Paul says, it doesn't matter who is from what economic background. The Holy Spirit is weaving ALL of you Corinthian believers into one family--the family of the redeemed.

I hope the parallel for Dartmouth Bible Church is obvious! It doesn't matter who has the money and who doesn't. It matters not ONE BIT who lives in Padanaram and who lives on Brock Avenue. The Spirit is trying to do one thing here at DBC: build us up; expand our influence for Christ; edify and encourage each saint here, regardless of his or her background.

Can you accept the differences that exist here? From time to time others have not been able to, and they have left in a huff. ACCEPTANCE though, has been a strong suit at Dartmouth Bible Church for the most part. We have really worked on this. Shall we continue to?

My prayer for us is that we learn to really ENJOY the different members of the Body, each with a unique and VALUABLE contribution to make... and that we shall GROW in our loyalty to what God is doing in our area through the ministry of a UNIFIED Church.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 12:14-30

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 6 5/29/88

DEPENDING ON ONE ANOTHER

Introduction Imagine with me some remote corner of the world where the people are very primitive in their way of life. A Christian missionary comes into their midst, wins their confidence and friendship and begins to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have no Bibles in their own language and therefore are completely dependent on the missionary and his wife to give them the truth. Many in the community trust Jesus in their hearts and there begins to develop a community-wide hunger to know God better. As the weeks go by, the missionary and his wife instruct the people about the nature of the true God, what He is like. The people are learning much vital information about God, and at the same time are UN-learning many of their pagan concepts about deity and how to relate to Him.

But then one day the missionary AND his wife are lost in a mud slide while journeying to another mission station. What becomes of the little Christian community that has just been planted? Will they survive? Will their infant-like faith survive?

I have painted a picture of Christianity in the most PRIMITIVE conditions imaginable, to stimulate your thinking about our passage today. I think *we think* of the subject of spiritual gifts in much too sophisticated a way. We think of modern American worship services, churches with a lot of education, where the people sit around and ANALYZE doctrines so much. We cannot HELP but be so "cerebral" about the truths we learn--heady, intellectual... that we forget that the reason we are given the Bible is not just to *KNOW* it, but to SEE GOD'S POWER. The Bible reveals for us God's great plan of redemption over all the ages. And He is so wonderfully sovereign that He is working each part of His plan out in each age, all pulling together in the final days when Jesus Christ shall literally return to this world!

But what about that little primitive Christian community? What about that little church? Remember, they have no Bibles and can't even read. How will they survive? They will survive because their survival does not depend on man, but on God Himself. God is the One who keeps His Church alive, right? Because people are Christians by HIS doing, and they STAY Christians by His doing:

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the WILL OF MAN, BUT OF GOD" (John 1:12,13)

Many of the fledgling fellowships of Christ in the first century were just like the church I have described. They were weak, often easily led astray, unbalanced. But with the Holy Spirit as their Guide and the apostles working hard to hold them together, the Church not only survived but grew immensely! One of the things that gradually happened, is that it became evident that certain people--in fact, actually, EVERYONE had been given some new ability to serve in the church.

I don't believe God waited for the apostles to make all the rounds in the early churches, so that they would have time to give seminars and set up classes, before He started giving the people in all those churches certain graces by which they could carry on the ministry.

I believe it was much simpler than all that--each person, when he or she would trust Christ had their own personal miracle occur. They would be spiritually placed into a new family--the Body of Christ, and equipped with some special ability wherein they could be useful.

But certain problems did occur, even though the people found themselves marvelously placed into a new family, and even though they discovered certain abilities with which to minister. One of the very real problems was that they were still real people...

Verses 14-17 God invented the Church by taking all kinds of different building blocks and making them into one single building. Or, to use Paul's metaphor in I Cor.12, He took all kinds of different "body-parts" and grew them together into a single body. But there were still some problems that had to be overcome:

- A. Some people didn't BELIEVE they could be useful, because they didn't have the same ability that someone else had. (verses 15,16).

This problem was rooted in one of two deeper difficulties:

1. Envy... because they didn't "turn out" the way they wanted ("I'm taking my marbles and going home.")
2. Insecurity... I can't do what he/she can do, so I am not valuable or needed.

Paul answers this problem logically and then dogmatically. In verse 17 he appeals to the plain sense of how a human body works. We would look pretty strange if we were one big mass of ears all attached to each other, with maybe five or ten feet attached...

"There are no insignificant members of the body. The reason for this kind of thinking is because we HAVE THE WRONG IDEA OF WHAT THE WORK OF THE CHURCH IS, and this is why people start to think they are insignificant in a church. There is a widespread concept today that the real work of the church is getting together and having a great meeting on Sunday morning, where we enjoy learning the Scriptures and fellowshiping with one another. And, this concept goes, the people who LEAD these meetings have certain gifts--they have to keep everything in order, make sure all the right things are said, etc.

OTHERS in the body look at them and say, "That is the work of the church. I can't do any of those things, therefore I don't really have any part to play in the church..."

But that is not the work of the church at all. The real work of the church is to *heal the broken-hearted out in the world, to give deliverance to the captives, and to preach the GOOD NEWS to the poor and despairing of heart*---to encourage, strengthen and help people, to DELIVER THEM from the guilt, the MISERY and the LONELINESS of sin--that stuff doesn't go on here; it goes on out there!" (Ray Stedman, Sermon)

And dear ones, that's where we need every one of you. We need your gift on Monday - Saturday! We need your abilities in the OTHER 95% of the week (although, please don't stop praying for a couple of piano players for Sunday morning!)

- B. Another problem they came up with in the area of spiritual gifts, Paul describes in verses 20-26. It is the problem of INDEPENDENCE, which sounds like this: "I DON'T NEED YOU."

Golfers are by nature very independent people. Golf is a game you don't play as a team. A golf tournament is a "struggle of independent egos pitted against each other" (Stedman).

God intends Christians to learn to depend on each other's gifts. That means I learn to depend on someone who has the *special ability* to exercise mercy; because I don't think I have that gift. I may not call for that need every day, but sometimes the need for that is very real.

It means that I LEARN to TRUST other Christians, to RISK VULNERABILITY, and get to the place where I ENJOY what my brother or sister can provide. Sometimes I need to be encouraged; other times exhorted; other times instructed; other times comforted. God has enabled somebody in this church with each of those abilities; although the people with those basic gifts may not be fully aware of it yet...

Paul says in verse 25b that all the members of the body are to have THE SAME CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER. We are to look out for each other--the up-front people, and the quiet, back-row

people. In Christ's Kingdom, the significant ones are not the ones who everyone knows their name. They are the quietly obedient ones, who, year in and year out quietly go about applying themselves to sanctification and doing what pleases Christ.

INDEPENDENCE is to be replaced by a mutual feeling for each other. In verse 26 Paul speaks of mutual sorrow in suffering and mutual rejoicing in honor. I am glad when one of you sees some success in your life. If you have a baby, if you get a promotion, if you win an award; that's exciting.

All of this is why God has gifted the Body of Christ--to give us the tools to learn to function AS HE INTENDS. To learn to depend on each other, and to appreciate *and make use of* each other's particular gift.

Let me close with a couple of real-to-life observations:

Observations on Today:

1. Not hanging around long enough to develop a NEED for someone else's particular gift, or for them to develop the NEED FOR YOURS.
2. Mutual rejoicing and mutual suffering *assume* that we KNOW what's going on in your life. That's a large part of what sharing times are all about. Many of you are too scared to share in the Body. Don't be. We have all, I hope, been touched with Christ's mercy. I need to know how you are doing.
3. Fellowship groups and other small groups (WST, Budget team, deacon board, Sunday school/C.C. team, AWANA team, etc.) are the REAL place where gifts are learned and used.

If you're with us today and you hear all this talk about spiritual gifts and "body-life" and so forth, and you look inside your heart and you say "I can't find any of that," or "I don't see any evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in my life," have you really met Christ yet? Simply ask Him to take charge of your life, beginning by wiping away all your sins, and all the guilt and pain. He will do it, because He says, "Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I shall give you rest." He is the Head of His Church, gifting the members AS HE SEE FIT, and He is her Savior, having sacrificed Himself to give her life.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: An Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 12:27-31

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 7 June 12, 1988

PAUL'S "PRIORITY PRINCIPLES" FOR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Introduction: My plan in taking the time to carefully go through these three chapters of I Corinthians, is that you can learn what God's PRIORITYES for you should be, in the discovery and use of your spiritual gifts. Basically, we have said four things so far:

1. When it comes to spiritual gifts, GOD IS THE GIVER (12:11,24).
2. Every true Christian has at least one spiritual gift (12:7).
In fact, I know of no verse which says that any Christian ONLY has one.
3. The least spectacular are probably THE MOST IMPORTANT (vs.23).
4. Spiritual gifts are given TO INCREASE UNITY and to SAFEGUARD AGAINST DIVISION. God never intends His grace-gifts to be a divisive matter, and never leads a Christian to use his/her gift in any non-edifying or hurtful manner (vss.25,26).

These are the four things that Paul has so far been trying to hit home to the Corinthian believers. He has said other things about gifts, but these are the "PRIORITY PRINCIPLES" that we should take to heart. Whatever else you may think about gifts, let those four things be the FIRST PRINCIPLES that you ponder on, pray about and pursue in DBC.

This morning we are going to add two more "PRIORITY PRINCIPLES" from Paul's thinking and exhortation to the Corinthian assembly.

But first let me encourage you with something that I have been encouraged with recently. I think Dartmouth Bible Church is growing in this area. I see more people slowly trying to discover their abilities to minister. I also see a beginning of folks learning from others about how to edify and build each other up. God is blessing us and I think you should know that! Praise the Lord, He is faithful and He always keeps His promise to honor and bless our efforts to be obedient and to honor His will.

Now, Paul says basically two things in the passage today. The first PRINCIPLE (which is, remember, the FIFTH in Paul's exhortation) is found in chapter twelve, verses 27-31a. He lists eight gifts that God has appointed, but the listing itself is not the point, as we shall see.

NOT ALL PEOPLE HAVE THE SAME GIFTS

This might strike you as obvious. Why should Paul need to make a point that just seems like a logical observation? He wants to demonstrate this principle, because the Corinthians (like probably most people) were prone to FORGET IT.

The first thing he says (verse 27) is that each Christian is a member of "Christ's body." The Bible likens the local church to a human body. The body has different parts and each part is equally and fully human. There are no body parts that are more human and belonging than other body parts.

Incidentally, this is why you do not have to be a "card-carrying" member of DBC in order to have a vital role in the ministry here. If you are a true Christian, then, BY DEFINITION, you fit in!

And then in verse 28 Paul lists eight gifts, in order of their importance. Notice what is LAST on the list. The Corinthian assembly had some who could supernaturally speak in some OTHER known language, other than their native tongue. We shall deal with this gift--the most troublesome in Corinth (and in other churches) when we go through chapter 14.

Apostles were God's gift to the assemblies. There were only 13 in the strictest definition of the word: an "apostle of Jesus Christ:" the original twelve and Saul of Tarsus. Others were later recognized in a more limited fashion. And I suppose that in the most limited definition--called and sent to preach the Gospel--there have always been people with apostolic ministry, because the Gospel is always going forth in this age, until Jesus comes again. But in the twisted sense that some church leaders CLAIM to be apostles today, *receiving direct revelation* and passing it on, in the same way that Peter and James and John and the fellows did, it is not at all so.

Let's look for a moment at Ephesians 4:11 & 12. God has given these four offices in the church as a blessing and out of His love for His people. They are not a necessary evil, as they are sometimes thought of. To ESTABLISH the church, God raised up apostles and prophets, and to SUSTAIN it, He raises up evangelists and pastor-teachers. Perhaps there are still prophets too, in a limited sense. Some people are especially gifted at PROCLAMATION, EXPOSITION and EXHORTATION. The idea that a prophet is someone who must predict the future is only a tiny part of what prophets did. I do not think that this is what prophets do today, although if God wanted to give someone a predictive message, He could. And I do not at all think that *continuing revelation* is going on today--it is dangerous to think so...

Paul mentions five other gifts:

TEACHERS: this is the person who is called and gifted for the purpose of studying and interpreting the Word of God for the church--at all age levels!

MIRACLES and GIFTS OF HEALINGS: these were Corinthian sign gifts, possessed by some in order to authenticate the radical new message that the apostles were spreading. While we believe that God can and does perform both miracles *and* healings, I do not see that Scripture (either in Acts, I Cor. or elsewhere) MANDATES these sign gifts for every church in every part of the church age.

HELPS and ADMINISTRATIONS: Now that we have passed the spectacular gifts, are you interested in these behind the scenes gifts? You should be, for they are just as important, IF NOT MORE SO, than the spectacular gifts. HELPS is just that--a person who enjoys, and doesn't *keep score* in helping people. This is what deacons are to be. "ADMINISTRATIONS" is the gift of leadership. It means the person who "steers or pilots a ship." It is the person with the ability to make wise decisions, to *mobilize, motivate and direct* others towards an objective. I believe that God gives this gift to every legitimate local church, and NOT JUST to pastors! Other leaders are needed, and it has been one of my most fervent prayers that God would grant this gift to a group of godly people in DBC!

In verses 29 and 30, we get back now, to this "priority principle" that Paul wants to impress his readers with (and the Lord wants you and I to take to heart. The principle is NOT ALL PEOPLE HAVE THE SAME GIFTS.

The Greek of these verses reads like you have it in the NASB and NIV, and not as the KJV renders it. Paul's questions anticipate a negative reply. All are not apostles, are they? No! All do not speak with tongues do they? No!

Note: Do you see right off the top here, that those who teach that (for whatever reason) all Christians are supposed to speak in tongues, are teaching a clear error?

The point is that God does not intend for everyone to have the same gift, and He does not intend for everyone to have gifts that are out front and noticed. He gives them according to His sovereign purpose, and it is the responsibilities of Christians to ACCEPT the ministries they are given with *gratitude* and to USE THEM with *faithfulness*.

Does that rub you wrong? You may feel, "Well, that won't let me be as independent as I want to be. That won't let me be my own boss in ministry the way I am in every other area of my life..." Well, if you feel like that, I direct you to the sixth of Paul's "priority principles" in the matter of spiritual gifts: 12:31-13:3.

GIFTS OR NO, THE BOTTOM LINE IS LOVE

In verse 31a, the Greek literally reads, "But you eagerly desire the greater gifts." Did Paul mean, "ARE YOU seeking the greater gifts?" Did he mean (as is most often assumed) "DESIRE EAGERLY the greater gifts!" To me, it makes the most sense that he is saying just as it literally reads--"you guys are hungering (*indicative mood*, MacArthur) after the great gifts--the spectacular ones...but I show you a still more excellent way!"

You may want great standing and recognition in the Body of Christ, but God's priority is not that you feel good, but that His body is edified and ministered to and encouraged and built up. That involves in you performing the job that God has so gifted you to do. That is really a great gift, when someone is doing what they are supposed to do--what GOD has equipped them to do.

Our society has us often brainwashed to think that life owes us instant and constant gratification. Church-life too owes me that. But Holy Scripture reveals that God is the great engineer of His Kingdom, and His children, redeemed from death by His love, and equipped by His love and wisdom, are to be "builders-up" of each other, regardless of what feels good at any particular time...

What does this church need? Has God gifted the folks in this church to spread the Gospel in foreign languages? Has He given the folks here the ability to raise the dead, give sight to the blind, and handle snakes? Is that what God wants Dartmouth Bible Church to concentrate on?

What does this church need? What are the gifts God has given this church? My prayer is that you will search your hearts, seek the face of the Savior with that question.

Now gifts or no, the bottom-line is love. The main measurement of whether a church is a sweet aroma to the Savior is, how much are they sacrificing for one another? That's what "love", biblically defined means! Yes, it is affection for one another, and warm feelings, and friendly greetings and enjoyment of one another's company. But mainly it is, how much do we sacrifice for one another? That's the kind of love that Jesus evidenced and practiced. It was not JUST "charity." It was sacrifice! A Spirit-filled church is a church where the individual members go about quietly and consistently watching out for each other and making sacrifices for each other. Is that us? May it be, Lord, may it be...

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: An Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 12:31b-13:7

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 8 June 19, 1988

A BETTER WAY TO DO MINISTRY

Introduction A recent re-run of the old "Andy Griffith Show" that I viewed featured a story where Deputy Barney Fife found himself being assisted in his deputying (and competed with) by a police academy student. Deputy Fife, of course, had no book-learning about being a Deputy Sheriff but the other young officer had *all kinds of fancy statistics* about crime trends and sophisticated methodologies about the science of upholding the law! You get the picture... In the end, all the techniques and methodologies in the world don't replace that ONE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT: experience in working with real people!

The Apostle Paul was called in on a similar scenario when he received a letter from the believers at Corinth. They asked him,

"How do we use all the different kinds of spiritual gifts we are discovering in our assembly? In fact, Paul, we've got such an abundance of gifts, they are causing us problems--not because God made a mistake in *giving* the gifts--but because we're getting real wrapped up in the technicalities of the gifts themselves, and with pride and partiality... What do we do?"

Paul accordingly devoted three full chapters SPECIFICALLY to their problems, and in today's passage he answers the question, "Paul, what do we do?" And dear ones, what do we do?

Is the ministry here at DBC dependent on your having the right combination of supernatural abilities? Like: "Teaching, exhortation and evangelism. That's what we need." Or maybe, "Leadership, mercy, and helps. THAT'S the 'key combination'!" Or even better, "Tongues, healing and prophecy--now THERE'S THE WINNING combination!" But dear ones, if Dartmouth Bible Church had NO SPIRITUAL GIFTS AT ALL resident in her members, would we then just have to close up shop, sell the property and all find some place else to worship? No. If there were no divinely granted grace-gifts in the people of this assembly, we would still have the one ingredient that makes the church STAND TALL and achieve her goals. Just like Barney Fife's one resume item (experience)--we would still have the one thing that gives being part of a church any meaning at all. That one thing is the love of Christ. And since the word "love" is used in today's passage six times, we should say something about what "love" means when it is used in the New Testament.

"AGAPE" LOVE: The Stuff that Holds the Body Together In the N.T. there are three Greek words used for our one English word, "love." And the word used in I Cor. 13 (*agape*) doesn't mean what WE usually mean by "love." WE usually mean what the Greek word *phileo* means: "brotherly affection." Or, we may use the other word, *eros*, which means "physical or erotic attraction." But the "stuff that holds the Body, the Church, together isn't just brotherly affection and it certainly isn't *eros* either.

Agape is the highest kind of commitment there is. It is the kind of commitment that exists between the Father and the Son (and is therefore a timeless quality). It is mainly characterized in the New Testament by sacrificial giving. It is the one ingredient, without which, no religious ACTIVITY is profitable! It doesn't matter how fancy a facility a church owns; without sacrificial giving on the inside, its just a hollow shell. It doesn't matter how gifted a person is, if he or she isn't motivated by what's in the OTHER PERSON'S BEST INTERESTS, their abilities may as well just stay on the shelf.

Do Ministry in Love In the first three verses of chapter 13, Paul lists SEVEN possible experiences, good in themselves, but useless if performed without the right motivation.

Notice please, that in the first, he does not say that people DO speak in some angelic language. He says IF he did... In fact, there is no indication from this verse at least, that angels speak their own unique language, or that they even NEED language, as such, among themselves. He simply creates a hypothetical situation, and places himself hypothetically in it, to show his main point! The other possible experiences are drawn out to emphasize the same point: MINISTRY DOESN'T COUNT, unless its done with godly love--which promotes the OTHER PERSON'S welfare.

Now this translates into one thing: decisions. Each day you and I make a series of decisions. We have a lot of freedom, and we pretty much are in control of each day. Loving each other doesn't so much mean are you always affectionate? Paul says its some OTHER "tests" that show whether a Christian, or a Christian assembly is ruled by the love of Christ. Those test-questions are found in verses 4-7.

What Godly Love Looks Like Paul now mentions seven things that love IS, and eight things "that it ain't." When you hear the word love, or when you USE it, replace the word with one of these things.

Godly love has the attitude of patience and kindness. It is not a decision which is made on the basis of jealousy, pride, anger or revenge.

It doesn't keep score as to how many times it has been hurt--it doesn't say something like, "I'll still love you, but I'll never trust you again."

Godly love finds joy in the truth--the things that God has revealed that are true. It is not a decision to walk in the counsel of wickedness, to stand in the path of sinners or sit in the seat of scof-

fers. I am afraid this is a side to the church today where we do not practice love. I see a fair amount of patience and kindness, but we also run after the counsel and philosophies of the world.

Take "Rambo" for instance... What values does that character represent? Does that character (who is really only the symbol and excuse for countless millions of dollars to be made) promote the truth? Does that character encourage you towards joy? Does that character promote revenge, anger and distrust? But how many Christians watch the Rambo-movies, buy the Rambo paraphernalia for their kids and justify it by saying, "It's not as bad as the Ghostbusters toys?" How much our INNER LIFE IS CONTROLLED by godly love, shows up in the decisions we make with regards to *rejoicing with the truth or with unrighteousness*.

Godly love is worked out by being SUPPORTIVE, TRUSTING, HOPEFUL and ENDURING. Being "supportive" (*bears [or COVERS] all things*) means that we do not drag into light the faults and mistakes of others. It means that we try to cloak someone's weaknesses, not put them on display.

Godly love is also TRUSTING. Jesus doesn't call us to be naive or to carelessly trust a fool. But He calls us to see the best in people rather than by always being suspicious. If you are basically a suspicious person, do not pride yourself in that! Don't "sanitize" it with an ethnic excuse ("Well, that's the Yankee or Irish or Danish way!") All that is, is the flesh. The Christian, who is growing in the love of Christ, is growing in being a TRUSTING person. That's love.

Godly love, Paul says, has two future aspects--it is OPTIMISTIC, and it is WILLING TO ENDURE PERSECUTION or and difficult situation that may come up. I believe being optimistic (because of knowing Christ) is much the same as whether you have JOY, or not. Godly love in your life--I mean living each day with the CONSCIOUS CONVICTION that God is loving you today!--will temper your daily attitudes to look hopefully towards the future. A Christian who is constantly down in the mouth, never cheerful, never happy--is the greatest theological contradiction I can imagine.

Godly love also is WILLING TO ENDURE ALL THINGS. I think this implies a willingness to TAKE RISKS. I may make a decision to help somebody, but it might blow up in my face. If I'm motivated by Jesus' kind of love, I'll attempt the ministry, even if there's a risk. Have you been hurt, burned, disappointed, had your time wasted? Are you cynical about it now? As you plug back into how much Christ loves YOU, you will re-calibrate yourself so that you can minister again in love, even if it involves some risk, because love endures all things without growing bitter.

The lesson is this: it doesn't matter how good your equipment is, without godly love, you can't do anything of value WITH IT. So, let's make practicing Christ's love, through the daily decisions we make, our priority here at DBC. What specific issues in this area are before you today? Are you willing to do God's will? If so, let's commit ourselves to it right now...

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: An Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 13:8-13

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 9 June 26, 1988

A QUALITY OF COSMIC PROPORTIONS

Introduction There are many pleasant and valuable things that you and I enjoy in life that are only temporary. Some good things only last a very short while, like the feeling you have after your team wins the Super Bowl, or, a banana split! Other good things last a little longer maybe, like a needed vacation, or the pleasant feeling of driving a new car. Finally, some really good things last QUITE a while--your marriage, enjoying your children, even for some, a happy and productive church membership that endures through many years! But even those things ultimately come to an end.

There is, however, one thing that will never end. It will never wither. It will never grow old, it will never become obsolete, it will never lose its power. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians that the agape love they had experienced in Jesus Christ would NEVER END. The Corinthians often had their eyes on the wrong things. They were overly concerned about the temporary and little concerned about the permanent. Instead of being controlled by the fruit that God gives, they were infected by materialism, pride, selfishness, compromise, indulgence, hatred, sexual immorality and jealousy--instead of Corinth being "Christianized", the Corinthian church was being paganized. And even with Corinth's Christian community in that condition, still Paul wanted to encourage them about that ONE QUALITY that had called them together in the first place, and which it was not too late to tie back into: the love of Christ.

Sometimes a church needs to sit back, take stock of where they are, and evaluate if they're really operating according to God's plan. It may be painful, and yet it bears fruit. Churches have a way of getting themselves into ruts--doing things in certain ways, NOT because they have thought things through, and have conviction that it is God's will--but because that's just the way its always been done. We need to take a sober look at ourselves from time to time, and ask, "Is this ministry, that relationship, this activity run on the principle of God's love?"

Verse 8 of chapter 13 starts off with the pronouncement, "agape oudepote piptei" (love never fails). BY NATURE, the quality of godly love is permanent. It is never abolished! It is part of God's nature and His eternal dominion!

"In heaven, we will not only have NO MORE NEED of faith and hope, but no more need for the gifts of teaching, preaching, helps, prophecy, discernment, knowledge, wisdom, tongues, miracles, healings, faith, mercy or leadership. None of those gifts will have a purpose or place in heaven. *Yet love is, and forever will be the very air of heaven.* (John MacArthur, *Commentary on I Cor.*)

Now these verses before give rise to many questions. We shall look at each verse carefully.

Verse 8 In contrast to love (which will never end), certain spiritual gifts that the Corinthian assembly had plenty of, would come to an end. I do not know a single Christian that resists that. All believers cheerfully concede that prophecy, tongues and knowledge, by definition, will expend their usefulness. The problem is that for the past century some Christians believe that those revelatory gifts have become OPERATIVE--even mandated for the Church of Jesus Christ. But this verse does not resolve that question: it only tells us that, when compared to the quality of godly love, those temporary gifts will pale and then cease over time.

I must tell you that my view of the use of the charismatic sign gifts (prophecy, tongues, knowledge) is "colored" by the fact that I am a lover of church history. And when you give yourself to a study of history, you get a different perspective on the present. Charismatic sign gifts hardly occurred at all from the end of the first century until the 1800s. Why is that? I cannot say absolutely for sure, but I am inclined to think it is because God wasn't generally giving them. Other tasks were in His plan for the church. Now, we see things happening in the lives of Christians that are claimed to be the same things that happened in the Book of Acts. I am not so sure.

At any rate, the rest of this chapter is given to the question raised by verse 10. But before we examine the remaining verses in chapter thirteen, let me add the caution that we NOT LOSE SIGHT OF PAUL'S OVERALL POINT: regardless of how you feel about the gifts, godly LOVE should rule in your life. That's what you and I need to remember. Ultimately, God is not going to be so nearly concerned about WHICH GIFT you had or didn't have, as He is with whether you and I have loved our neighbors and wives and husbands and children and fellow church-members, as we love our own selves. THAT'S the big test question! And how quickly it is forgotten sometimes, in favor of one prejudice or another about spiritual-gift technicalities!

Now in verses 9 and 10 Paul begins this question of TIME. In his time, prophecies (of various types) were received. Even then, when they were real, they were only partial revealings of what God was doing. Even Paul didn't know the whole picture. God knows perfectly, but we can know Him now only imperfectly, just as David talked about in Psalm 139:1-6... Paul wrote elsewhere about how we know now (Romans 11:33,34)

But he says a time was coming when partial understanding, and its tools, will be done away. That time will be, Paul says, "when the PERFECT comes." What is "the perfect?" It seems that to resolve this difficult question will help in a lot of ways!

I want to first tell you a few things that I think are NOT what Paul had in mind:

THE PERFECT is not the completion of Scripture. For quite a few years this *has* been my view. But I have come to see that to interpret "the perfect" in that way is to import a theological idea that is out of context, and which the Corinthians would probably not have understood. Also, as wonderful as the Bible is, it does not bring us "face to face" with God. There are other reasons too, that I have changed my mind on this.

THE PERFECT is not the rapture, and it is not the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, because it appears from the New Testament that during the great Tribulation and during Christ's millennial Kingdom, knowledge and prophecy will again become operative. The Greek form for "the perfect" is the word *teleion* which is neuter--it is neither male nor female. If Paul had Jesus Christ in mind, why would he refer to him in the neuter?

Another view says that THE PERFECT refers to the maturing church. It is true that *perfect* often has the meaning of maturity or completion, but that amounts to the rapture or to the Second Coming--surely in no time before that is the Church complete.

This all then, leaves only one other option, which I have come to see as the best suggestion as to what Paul meant by "the perfect." That is the eternal and heavenly state of believers. Paul is saying that spiritual gifts last only for time, but that love will last for all eternity. In this age we still depend on knowledge and learning, and, to a limited degree on prophecy, in that proclamation is still around. We still need, in other words, preachers and teachers. Also, it makes sense to refer to the perfect, complete, state in which believers will exist, in the neuter which is how the Greek renders it.

Let's consider now verse 11. I think Paul is saying that compared to the sustained commitment to love each other in a godly, selfless way, gifts are elementary. They are "Christianity 101", the basics. Hebrews 6:1,2 says much the same. Paul says the big picture, and pressing on in Christian growth, requires so much more than just exercising supernatural abilities. Learning how TO LOVE--indeed, to practice a cosmic quality that will be the "very air of heaven"--that's pressing on to maturity!

Dear ones, you and I live in an age when we must cling to the hope that Scripture says we can have in Christ. We also do not apologize for the fact that to HAVE that hope, one must exercise faith--trust and dependence--in the promises of Scripture. But now, as in the future when we will no longer need faith and hope, we need to be EXERCISED in a quality of cosmic proportions--godly love. May the Holy Spirit, given to all true Christians and to their assemblies, as a pledge, a seal and a comforter, help us to be burdened to walk in love; to walk in godly love!

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: An Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 14:1-5

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 10 7/17/88

DEVELOPING EDIFICATION

Introduction Over the past couple of weeks I have been pondering what some of the SPIRITUAL needs of this assembly are. I have asked myself and some of you, "what needs are we living with right now--what spiritual necessities are we yearning for?" This past Thursday evening, in our fellowship group, we looked at what the Scripture calls out as genuine spiritual needs, things like 1) nourishment from God's Word; 2) establishment and grounding in sound doctrine; 3) a hunger just for righteousness; 4) the exercise of compassion; and we shall look at four other spiritual needs that Scripture mandates for a healthy church on this next Thursday, Lordwilling!

We sort of settled on Thursday night, by the way, that the individual members of the Body must ask THEMSELVES the question, "What are my spiritual needs," before they are really in any position to assess the Body as a whole... So, I hope you are willing dear ones, to ask yourself that question and not miss it! Only if you are seeking God's presence personally, are you in a position to evaluate the health of the whole Body.

Now today's passage is about another true spiritual need that the assembly at Corinth had: edification. Many people assume the passage is about speaking in tongues, or the gift of prophecy, but ask yourself the question, "why is this passage here?" What is on Paul's mind and heart? When you read the verses with those questions in mind, you are mining for something deeper than just something about tongues or prophecy.

Paul is dealing with a one of the Corinthian controversies that was really dividing the Christian assembly in the city of Corinth. He probably would never have brought up the matter of spiritual gifts, especially the spectacular ones, if they had not been causing so many problems in the assembly. Apparently, the two gifts of tongues and prophecy were proving especially troublesome, because it looks like even in Corinth you had two factions developing: I call them "the haves" and "the have-nots." There were those people who prayed in some language other than their own, and God had supernaturally enabled them to do this; and there were those who did NOT have this ability and apparently felt uncomfortable around those who DID.

Now an important feature of the passage that I hope you will not miss is that even though Paul mentions some things about tongues and prophecy in this passage, what he says about those gifts is SECONDARY.

(ministry)

His main point is this: *edification which is not aimed at serving others is self-centered and pointless.* That is the overall message of chapter 14. When you think, "First Corinthians Fourteen," think: "All activities in the assembly must serve, in some way, to build up the community." That's what the chapter is about, although the particular APPLICATION here, is the relative value of tongues versus prophecy.

That also needs to be the creed by which we operate. Whatever programs we have here, whatever activities, whatever relationships and ways we chose to behave with each other, whatever songs we sing, whatever committees we form or fellowships we convene, let each and every one of them be CONTROLLED by the desire of each person involved to BUILD UP THE BODY.

What it means "to edify" someone, or "to build them up", is to *strengthen them*, to encourage them and give them heart for continuing on in the faith. Edification is when you listen to another Christian teach, testify, sing, share of pray, and *you are enheartened* by that teaching, testimony, song, shared experience or prayer...

Edification is like a peanut butter sandwich--the more you spread, the better the sandwich sticks together!

Now today, our text reads "pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy (14:1)." He has told the Corinthians that unless their lives are controlled by a godly love and concern for one another, little else really matters to God. The practice of love is something to be PURSUED, to HUNTED and CHASED DOWN. Really loving your brothers and sisters in Christ doesn't happen automatically! It has to be practiced! It becomes habit only as the conscious effort is made; only as you get into the habit of making daily decisions which are in the other guy's best interests.

And having said all that, he doesn't want all the Corinthians now to just FORGET the spiritual gifts they have... Spiritual gifts, after all, are not just the inventions of men--they aren't just social customs. They are grace-gifts given by the Living God, imparted by the Son, through the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. They are not to be taken lightly either.

Then he tells them that when the two gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues were compared, PROPHECY was the superior gift. There were a number of "speaking" spiritual gifts: prophecy, tongues & interpretation, exhortation and teaching. Of these, prophecy was very valuable--most often, I believe, this gift was like preaching. It exhorted the assembly and applied the truth to people's daily lives. It was exercised in front of the whole assembly so that all who heard might be built up in the Christian faith.

Tongues, on the other hand, was a private matter. Whatever it was, whether just like prophecy, except in a known foreign language for the benefit of foreigners present in the assembly--this is what I think it was, or whether it was a private prayer-utterance (I do not think the Scripture warrants this understanding), it was PRIVATE. Note with me four other Biblical facts:

1. The Bible records no instance of believers speaking to God in anything but normal, intelligible language.
2. In Jesus own high, priestly prayer to the Father, in John 17, "in which the Son poured out His heart to the Father, when deity communed with deity, the language is remarkably simple and clear" (John MacArthur, *Commentary on I Cor.*)
3. The instructional prayer that Jesus gave His disciples, which we commonly call the Lord's prayer, is a model of *simplicity and clarity*.
4. The Corinthians seem to have been more interested in the sophisticated rather than the simple, in the mysterious rather than the edifying. That is probably what Paul means in verse 2 when he says that the tongues-speaker "speaks mysteries."

Then, three things are supposed to happen when you're hearing prophecy: edification, exhortation and consolation. The first we have already said something about. If someone is preaching or addressing the assembly and IT IS NOT edifying, ask yourself,

"Is it something in me, or is it the content, attitude, or language of the speaker?"

"Exhortation" is not yelling at people. But it *is* challenging them to do something that they should be doing. Exhortation can occur on a private level and some Christians have the ability to challenge their brethren in a non-threatening way. But here, it is a part of prophecy. Part of what prophecy does is, it *challenges* the saints to further discipleship for Christ.

I think that you and I NEED exhortation, because we are prone to "stall out" in our Christian growth. We may grow discouraged, or too content and comfortable, and simply switch from "Drive" into "Coast." That's when we need to be exhorted, and exhortation is one of the functions of prophecy.

Admonishment, by the way, is when someone CORRECTS someone else. And the New Testament tells us to do this too, although carefully and always in a spirit of humility.

The other effect of prophecy that Paul mentions in verse 3 is "consolation." A real important part of what was *supposed* to be going on within the Corinthian assembly, was public consoling--"It's going to be OK, my brethren. Be comforted, because God is in control of your circumstances."

You and I need this from time to time. You may think, "yeah, yeah, I know all that already." But we need to hear it from someone that we know cares about us.

Now Paul makes a contrast in verse 4, between what tongues did, and what prophecy did. The tongues-speaker maybe got "a rush" off what he did, but no one else drew any benefit from it. But prophecy benefited

everyone who heard it. The church was "edified." They went out from the assembly, after hearing a prophetic ministry, and felt like moving out for Jesus--or, at least, like "hanging in there for another day!"

In verse 5 Paul affirms that tongues were good. If someone had the ability to proclaim the message of God in a foreign language, that was useful sometimes and a good thing, because God GAVE the person the ability to do it. But FAR MORE VALUABLE was the ability to responsibly and effectively address the whole assembly! Then, everyone is built up!

If someone ever invited me to plant a brand new church, from scratch. I think I would institute two kind of meetings for adults. And I would tell the flock that if you wanted the full "package" you need to come to both. The first is the worship time, when people sing and pray and hear the Word of God taught and expounded. The second meeting would be the "family time," when their would be sharing, addressing of concerns and sharing of prayer requests. In that second time, we would hear from each other; in the first time we would concentrate wholly on the Lord Jesus.

Edification requires concentration. It requires us to take care in the words we choose to use, and the tone of voice we use, and to respect one another and not try to talk PAST and OVER one another. Business meetings so often, have the reputation of NOT being edifying times! I don't know why Christians should consider themselves immune from practicing love and edification just because the business of the church is what's "on the table" at the moment...

Edification requires a whole-Body viewpoint. It means I'm not just consumed with *my own* interests, but that I care about the well-being, and indeed GROWTH of the whole group assembled.

As we said in the beginning, once in a while, a church should ask itself, "Are we still in tune with God's priorities? Are we meeting each other's spiritual needs, some of which are an edifying assembly meeting, exhortation, consolation. Are the saints being built up and equipped to minister *themselves*? Is edification an important and valued feature of the church?"

Like all churches, we are still learning. I think we have come a long way and shall continue to feel the Holy Spirit guiding and directing us. Let's really work on keeping the things God says are the highest priority, on the top of our list of things we put our corporate energy into and talk about--things like outreach, and extending mercy and being good friends to each other, and learning the sound truth of Scripture. May the Lord Jesus keep us "on balance" and protect our hearts and minds from IMBALANCE or from overemphasizing the secondary things in church life.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: An Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 14: 6-19

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 11 7/24/88

TONGUES: THE LEAST OF CORINTH'S GIFTS

Introduction It is so easy to forget what's important in the Christian life. You are not immune from distraction, and neither am I. In fact, all too often, the Christian lives his life in a *state of distraction* and fights a continual battle to keep his eyes on pursuits which emphasize GOD'S PRIORITIES.

The N.F.L. season each year includes four pre-season games, sixteen regular season games and then (hopefully) two playoff games and then the Super Bowl. The best teams in the league therefore, play twenty-three official football games and endure a very intense season routine which lasts from July until February!

Imagine then, how successful a player would be if he concentrated all his energy on one particular game in the season. Playing that one team may hold great significance for that player, but one game a season does not make! The best players are the ones who keep the "big picture", the whole season, in view!

In the Christian life, we need to constantly remind ourselves AND EACH OTHER of what's really important to the Lord -- THOSE are the things we need to concentrate on. He wants you and I to endure the whole season and to come out winners after the Super Bowl, just like Paul said, near the end of his life,

"I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me; but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7,8)

Now, when we come to the question of the supernatural "sign gifts" in Scripture, let's you and I keep the whole matter in perspective. Whether a church is truly "Spirit-filled" or not has little if anything to do with how spectacular it's ministry looks--that is one of the very REASONS Paul wrote his I Corinthians. Being Spirit-filled is a much bigger picture. It has to do with much more than who has what gift... Being Spirit-filled means being controlled by the Spirit. That means manifesting the fruits of God's Holy Spirit, not blowing each other away with spectacular public shows of prayer or music or influence.

In I Corinthians 14, Paul lays out what the truth was about the Corinthian gift of tongues-speaking and prophecy. So far I suggested to you that:

1. Tongues-speaking was in known languages for the purpose of praising God and evangelism.
2. To say that what we read in I Corinthians or Acts is automatically mandated for all churches of all centuries is to completely miss a major teaching of the Bible--that God works out His grand "Master Plan" of the ages in different ways in different ages. It is also to be ignorant of history, because from the third century to the middle of the eighteenth century almost no one claimed to have these sign gifts.
3. Prophecy has several sides to it; not just prediction and revelation (which I believe are no longer given), but also in the "expository preaching" sense; which includes exhortation, and edification and consolation.
4. This chapter is about EDIFICATION and any discussion of I Cor.14 should start and finish with a discussion of how to edify one another. That has its first application in how we use our speech, like Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians,

"Let your speech always be with grace [or, gracious], seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how to respond to each person" (Col.4:6)

In verses 6-11 then, Paul says that public tongues-speaking was profitless unless the assembly could derive some truth from it--some edification from the utterance. That means that if someone wanted to address this body here at DBC in French, and petitioned the leadership for some time, it wouldn't be at all profitable, or worth taking the time for it, if someone couldn't translate the French utterance into Dartmouthese... And then, folks, does it strike you that it would take time to do the translating? We don't all speak in different languages. We all speak the same language. Why would we *need* tongues, in the biblical sense? Anything we do together should not waste time, should be of general interest to everybody and should make some SENSE to everybody...

I know I'm always encouraging those of you who are quiet-type folks to speak up. But let me say something on BEHALF of those who are quiet and don't LIKE to speak in public meetings. Sometimes they may be the wiser among us! Better to keep quiet and be a good listener than to speak out, and some people in churches do this OFTEN, and not make any sense to people at all...

If tongues-speaking does not COMMUNICATE, in Paul's mind, it is just blowing hot air--and that is the point of his illustration in verses 7-11.

Verse 10 is important, because I understand Paul to imply here that the languages of real tongues-speaking were "with meaning." He is not talking about private-prayer languages, the idea which I think comes more from Eastern religious theology than it does from the Bible.

Verse 12 is one you should write on a card and memorize it. Verse 12 is part of God's priority system. Whatever a church is, and has and does with its time--whatever a church holds about spiritual gifts, that church needs to raise verse 12 to the top of the list of what's important. What God asks Dartmouth Bible Church (that's you and me...) is this: if spiritual gifts are so important to you, do you work hard at using them to build each other up?

Verses 14 and 15 require a careful look. Does Paul now turn right around and say that even though no language is without meaning, he may speak in a tongue, or pray in a tongue (and remember the context here is NOT private prayer--the whole context is prayer in the Christian assembly)...he does NOT understand what he is praying with his mind? Yes, he does, I believe. But he is NOT saying that the language he is praying in is an unintelligible, gibberish kind of utterance that angels or other heavenly residents use. He does not say that, although this is precisely what many Pentecostal and charismatic brethren SAY he is saying.

He was saying that even if he prayed, using the gift of being able to pray in a foreign (to him) language, his human spirit enjoyed it, but his mind (and everyone else's) got no benefit from it.

Quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, Jesus said that we should love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our soul and with ALL OUR MIND (Matt. 22:37). God does not call us to do mindless, mysterious things. The clear things He DOES call us to do take enough effort as it is. Things like loving my family, and learning how to be an effective witness of the Gospel of eternal life, and loving the brethren and dealing with sin in my own life. THOSE THINGS are the big picture.

At the end of the passage, in verses 18 and 19, Paul says something that must have stung his Corinthian readers. He says he DID HAVE an abundance of this gift, but that he also understood that it was an inferior gift, after all... BOTTOM LINE: what really matters is building one another up. How you do it is of secondary importance--THAT we do it, is of PRIMARY importance!

Let me close by saying that as an expositor of Scripture and as a pastor and as a Christian, I am not "anti speaking in tongues." So often people will over-simplify what is really a complicated issue, and try to characterize a teacher or a church as black or white on some issue. I am anti-anything which splits churches or causes division. I am not anti-"glossalalia", because God was the creator and giver of that gift, and if HE chose to give it to somebody ever again, it would be foolish and contradictory for one of His servants to try to discredit it. But what we see so much today, I am not at all convinced is the Biblical gift of tongues OR prophecy. This is where I stand on it; it is where this fellowship stands. It does not mean we have departed from Scripture, that we despise God's precious Holy Spirit or that we are hateful of

other brethren who feel otherwise. It means we are going to emphasize the priorities that the Bible emphasizes. We are going to define ourselves, find our vision and spend our effort on the things that God says are of most importance!

If by chance, you are still without Christ this morning, you do not need tongues or super experiences, you need Christ. He is the Savior. He is the Lord. He is the King. Christ alone can forgive your sins, give you eternal life and give you a divine purpose for living. You must receive Christ into your life by faith, believing that He died for your sins, and you must bow to Him as Lord, giving HIM the right to rule your life. Come to Christ and He is all the experience you will ever need, for to know Him is life!

May the grace of Christ our Savior, and the Father's boundless love,
With the Holy Spirit's favor, rest upon us from above.

Thus may we abide in union, with each other and the Lord,
And possess, in sweet communion, Joys, which earth cannot afford.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: An Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 14:20-25

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 12 8/14/88

APPLYING EDIFICATION

Introduction I have been pondering some on the subject, "What is the vision of Dartmouth Bible Church?," or, "what should it be?" And I keep coming back to the feeling that we're supposed to concentrate on the things that Jesus said were important. Evangelism, Jesus said, is important--in fact, His last words spoke of it. Being mature and balanced in doctrine is important. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." And,

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin [like caraway seeds], and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" *Matthew 23:23,24*

I take it from this that Jesus wants us to concentrate on "the weightier" things, the most CRUCIAL THINGS--to not spend all our time disputing secondary issues, as churches are so inclined to do... He desires us to "major on the majors" and to "minor on the minors." This is part of my vision for this fellowship--because I believe it is very important to our Lord.

Another priority in the heart and mind of Christ is that His Body should be practicing His kind of love, for each other. Internally, the Church, the Elect, the Bride, is to be operating under the influence of the very Spirit of Jesus. The way the members treat each other, the way they speak to each other, the way they feel about each other, are to be "lubricated" by the oil of His sacrificial lovingkindness. That's very important to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. It should be part of our vision here at Dartmouth Bible Church. It should be our reputation in the community. It shouldn't be part of an annual campaign; it should be a part of the "standard operating procedure" here.

Think what DBC would be like, if at every meeting, each member said to himself, right at the beginning, "How can I build up someone today, this evening, or whenever the Body is together?" Think what it would be like, if folk's FIRST THOUGHTS as they are preparing for some ministry, "How can I further the work that the Holy Spirit is wanting to do in, AND THROUGH our assembly?"

Dear ones, all this brings us back to I Corinthians 14. The chapters we have been looking at; indeed, the whole book, is aimed at demonstrating that the local church--whether it is big or small, whether it is in Corinth in 58 A.D. or in Dartmouth in 1988 A.D.--the local church is to reflect God's love BACK ON ITSELF.

The particular ISSUES in which the Corinthian Christians were NOT using love in, were spiritual gifts. But Paul wasn't motivated to write chapter fourteen just to say some things at random about spiritual gifts. He was motivated because the Corinthians' church services had become selfish, indulging opportunities to act spectacular, and they had become disorderly and worldly, and apparently even dominated by some of the women.

Now in verse 20, Paul tells them to become mature thinkers. There is also an interesting contrast in the verse; do you see it?

Mature thinkers (who are spiritual adults)
will be IMMATURE when it comes to evil...

Almost 3,000 years ago the writer of Proverbs wrote, "Do not eat the bread of a selfish man or desire his delicacies; for as he thinks within himself, so he is. Jesus said, "...the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." (Matthew 12:34)

For the Corinthians (just like for us), behavior is most often determined by how you think about the matter. If you have already decided that you don't like people of a certain race, then your behavior will reflect that. If you have already decided that the King James Bible is the only Bible worth reading, then probably no amount of arguing or further information is going to change your mind. A person's MIND and his WILL are woven together. If you think that place in the Body, your opinion, your gift, is of somewhat more value than someone else's, then whether you ever SAY SO or not, that thinking will show up in your decisions and the way you relate to other members of the Body.

When it came to spiritual gifts, Paul wanted the Corinthians thinking to be CONTROLLED by God's love FIRST--then, the practice of gifts would be balanced and edifying and valuable to the Body at large. My brother's gift will in fact be something I TREASURE!

By reading this book, it seems that IN EVIL, the Corinthians were anything BUT babes. They were mature in all sorts of evil, not the least of which was a selfish, ego-boosting abuse of tongues-speaking.

In verses 21-23 we get to the heart of the matter about tongues--what the TRUE PURPOSE WAS... Paul quotes from Isaiah's prophecy, 28:11,12, and shows that, YES, hundreds of years before Christ, God told Israel that one day He would speak to this people by strange tongues from the lips of strangers. But despite this miraculous sign, Israel would not hear Him.

The other night, one of the brothers asked that we should pray together and ask the Lord to help us to HEAR HIS SPIRIT'S VOICE MORE. I think that was a mature prayer request. We need to hear what He wants to say to us. We need to hear His Word. We need to feast upon what does not fade away, even though the grass withers and the flower fades! If you are spiritually dry, these days, are you hearing His Word? If you are dry, and you admit to yourself that you haven't been hearing His Word, that ought to be a clue to you as to what PART, at least, of the problem is.

We don't need more spectacular worship services. We don't need more beautiful facilities. We don't need more people. We don't need better music. We need to each, personally, individually, one by one, be hearing the voice of God in our personal and individual hearts!

The strange tongues that Isaiah predicted, are what we see here in Corinth as the gift of languages. Do you see Paul's point?

THE GIFT OF TONGUES WAS GIVEN AS A SIGN TO UNBELIEVING ISRAEL.

It was a three-fold sign: a sign of cursing (in that Pentecost would soon usher in Israel's dispersal and destruction), a sign of blessing (in that the gift displayed God's intention that the Gospel was not just for Jews but now also for people of every nation), and a sign of authority (in that tongues VALIDATED the apostles' and prophets' message. Tongues were not used to TEACH but to POINT. And when the thing to which sign-gifts pointed was arrived at, the signs ceased. What did they point to? Jesus Christ is Israel's Messiah. His Kingdom has begun. Israel will go on the shelf, for a time, and God's people will now become multi-national!

When you're driving up Route 24, you see a sign that says BOSTON 45. Then a while later you see one which says BOSTON 25. Then you see one a few minutes later which says BOSTON 15. But when you get to Boston you don't see any more sign posts--you're there!

Although tongues could be edifying (and remember, that's what this chapter is about!), when interpreted, their primary purpose was as a sign to unbelieving Jews who might wander in. or purposely investigate this new Christian assembly.

PROPHECY, on the other hand--in all its different levels of operation (prediction, exhortation, consolation, building up) was a sign for believers. Crossing the wires of what each was intended to do in Corinth, was part of the Corinthians' problem.

Note that Paul doesn't think its too good if the unbelievers around think the believers are crazy! (vs.23b) That's part of our vision too, brethren--trying to show non-Christians that we aren't wackos. We are reasonable, thoughtful people, who care about each other, and put each others' best interests ahead of our own. That is what developing edification is all about!

Notice last, that part of the goal of the church is to show non-Christians that God is certainly among us! He is CERTAINLY here! It was the power of supernatural phenomena that God gave the earliest Christians to use to reach that goal. God wanted THEN to be seen by the world in His people, and He desires so today. Today we have the Bible and the Bible alone is my creed!

I need no other argument, I need no other creed! It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me.

May God give each person in this little church the vision to be an edifier of his brother and sister. May that be part of our priority-structure in DBC. May God help you to commit yourself again to that, and may He bless you richly and mightily as you seek to please Him.

Apply ~~edification~~ convictions

- ① your behavior as thoughts through / tempered w/ S.
/ considering the best interests of the Body
- ② we should use every good means at our disposal to show the reality of Xp to men (w) — edification of BORN believers!
- ③ Ministry by Bible teaching should be always balanced — Heb. 4:12

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: An Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 14: 26-33

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 13 8/21/88

WHEN WE COME TOGETHER...

Introduction Some people just plain don't like to go to church. Its not because they hate the Bible, or even hate other people--they just don't naturally like going to a place and sitting still for an hour or more, singing, giving money, listening to some preacher... I can understand this, because before I became a Christian I didn't like to go to church either. It all seemed so contrived to me, and just not too real.

But when a person becomes a true Christian going to church is supposed to become something new for him. We spend time with each other here on Sunday mornings because it feels natural and right to gather together in one assembly and worship our Savior. I do not think (at least I HOPE not) that any of you are here out of fear or out of a sense of obligation. I hope that each of you is here because you enjoy being with your brothers and sisters in Christ, and because you really desire to take time out to worship God, and because you anticipate getting something out of the Word of God.

The passages we read from Acts show a family of simple people, gathering with joy and excitement in their hearts, and devoting themselves to a few simple priorities:

"...and they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42)

The earliest Christians had no church buildings, no mailing lists, and no electronic gadgetry. They had the apostle's teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Table and prayer. They also had occasional signs and wonders being performed in their midst as tools to help them witness to the resurrected Jesus to an unbelieving Israel. They didn't have much else. It was primitive Christianity; raw, unadorned, rudimentary.

They seemed to have TWO TYPES OF MEETINGS in the first century, one in which, as described in I Cor.14, people met together in a small intimate gathering, in which they could all share with each other and exercise their spiritual gifts. But there were also large, informally conducted meetings where preachers would preach and teachers would teach the whole of the Body, and one or two people could exercise a spiritual gift to the whole Body. We have been trying here at DBC to approximate that pattern. We have this meeting, and we have smaller fellowship groups. That's New Testament Christianity!

You know, I feel that many American Christians today yearn for a Christianity of that kind. I think that a lot of fine, church-going believers today subconsciously wish they could return their church to the earliest days. Christianity would be purer, and more effective in reaching the lost, it seems, if we could strip ourselves of modern baggage...

But dear ones, the early church was made up of sinners just like you and I. It is right after the passages we read in Acts 2 and 4 that Acts chapter 5 tells us about Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Spirit and kept back part of their offering. It was only roughly twenty years after Acts 2 and 4 that the new Christian assembly in Corinth became sick with selfishness and the desire on the part of some to take the stage with their more spectacular spiritual gifts--

Now when we come together, the meeting is supposed to be edifying. It is supposed to build you up. It is supposed to encourage you and give you some renewed strength to go back out for the rest of the week. Any church service which does not do that--and I don't care HOW orthodox the church is in its doctrine--is not honoring the Lord. When you read through I Corinthians, you will notice that Paul did not deal with matters of false teaching or heresy the way he did in Galatians and Colossians. Why do you suppose that is? Why is it that in one of the longest letters Paul wrote to Christians, he didn't dwell on having orthodox doctrine? Because that wasn't their problem. As far as we know, the Corinthians basically had their doctrine checked out, squared away and hammered out fine. Yet they were a sick church... Doctrine wasn't their problem--selfishness and pride was their problem. And that selfishness and pride had manifested itself in the meetings when they came together. The tongues-speakers were monopolizing the assembly and those who wanted to exhort, instruct, console and edify the Body were being short-changed because the tongues-speakers had a more spectacular gift. That brings us to this morning's passage...

The Way It Should Be (verse 26) I think it is neat to see what each person brings to church. Each of you is unique, and each of you has a unique testimony to share about how the Lord Jesus has been working in your life. I think the church should always have ample opportunity to *hear from itself*. In some meeting, every week, you should have the opportunity to HEAR how God has been working in the lives of your brothers and sisters. It is sad when church's never provide that, or when it is provided only infrequently.

If we could ever get over the feelings of inadequacy and insecurity that seem to stifle us here, and learn to share openly the joys, the trials and the answers to prayer--it would really be something!

Now Paul says that the Corinthian assembly included participation by many. One fellow would share a psalm (what a great book!); another would bring a teaching--that is, instruction about a point of doctrine or truth. Someone else would voice a revelation that the Lord had shown them. And, someone else would address the Body, or praise the Lord in a language other than Greek; then, it would need to be interpreted and the interpretation directed to any unbelievers present--the message in that foreign language was an authenticating sign to those unbelievers.

Paul said that each of these features should serve in some way to build up the Body (vs. 26d). That is a real good principle for us. Each feature of OUR ASSEMBLY MEETINGS should build up the Body. That has a lot of implications for churches, I think! Here are some ideas I draw from this principle:

1. A part of the service that people USED to like years ago, but that isn't ministering to folks NOW, should be re-worked or even scrapped.
2. Every part of the service should be AUDIBLE. If you can't hear it, you can't be encouraged by it.
3. Although having a "Scripture Reading" portion of the service is sometimes perceived as merely traditional, it should be included as often as possible. The Word of God always edifies and although we may not always want to hear it, it is always profitable!
4. Each participant in the meeting should endeavor to direct the people's attention to Jesus, not to him or herself. This is why some churches are hesitant to use "special music." My personal conviction is that those who lead the service should not wear flashy or attention getting clothes. That detracts from why we are hear and it only serves to draw attention to one's self.

Particulars for Speaking in the Meeting (vss. 27-32)

These verses relate to tongues, the interpretation of tongues and to prophecy. I have given you what I think the truth is on what those gifts were, and how I feel about their relevance today. What I want you to see today, is how this passage can relate to us. We are a church which invites sharing, public prayer and testimonies from the Body. In fact we are going to hold a special meeting soon to invite each of you to share things that have been ENCOURAGING to you about the Lord, and this fellowship! I hope that goal will attract all of you!

Verse 27 regulates how many speak. It shouldn't go on forever. And what is said should have some meaning to the whole Body. Sometimes people in churches want to get up and talk about something that has NO meaning to the people--they just need someone to listen to them and so they take advantage of the church meeting, where they have a captive audience. Now speaking in tongues has not been the issue here, but sometimes Christians have not had the goal of building their brothers up when speaking out.

Please don't let this regulation discourage you FROM speaking out. I long to hear from those of you who never testify or share. No church meeting should be dominated always by the same people. There ought to be an increasingly accepting environment in a church, and the quiet ones slowly are drawn out and given confidence to share what is on THEIR hearts! So sharing out to be by a reasonable number, the word they want to share should be intelligible and encouraging to the Body.

Having said that though, notice from verse 28 that its OK to keep silent in church. We spend a lot of energy trying to draw you out and strengthen you and give you confidence to share, but until you're READY to share its just FINE to remain silent and just quietly worship the Lord. There is to be a balance. Remember what God wants--your praise, and your ministry to your brothers and sisters who NEED you!

Now in verses 31 and 32 Paul talks about prophets. There were also apostles around too. I am not an apostle. In a loose sense, I suppose, you could say I exercise a prophetic gift, and in a stricter sense, you could say I am a teacher. My office is pastor and elder. That does not make me infallible, however. You need to check what I say by Scripture and you need to check what anyone ELSE says by Scripture!

Actually, the best judges of what a man says are the peers of his own gift. A servant can best gauge how another servant is ministering. A gifted teacher can perceive best whether another teacher is effective. The same was true of these prophets. They were to exercise self-control and encourage each other.

Demonic revelations can induce a person into bizarre, trancelike or ecstatic experiences. But God does not work like that. The prophet's spirit, his behavior was subject to the OTHER prophets in the assembly and what THEY knew of the Word of God.

Verse 33 is a key to the whole chapter--remember this verse when we come to the thorny problem we approach in the last verses!

Verse 33 says our worship of God is to reflect the character and nature of God. The worship services of Christians are supposed to MIRROR the peace and harmony that are part of who their God IS--not strife and confusion, which are things of THIS world, the flesh and the devil. God cannot be honored where there is disharmony, confusion, competition, frenzy or self-glorifying attitudes.

DBC has come a long way in our meetings! I can see this and I praise God how we have learned and are learning what pleases Him. In earlier years there was disharmony. Then that was sort of cleaned out and then there was a time of confusion. I think we have pretty much dealt with that, and now we are beginning to learn to really minister!

Let me close by saying that Paul says there is ONE THING, at least, which God is doing in every one of His assemblies--He is building in His peace. The Lord desires that the church be a refuge from the confusion and strife which the world perpetrates... May we keep His peace in view, always pray for peace for and with one another, and keep growing as a simple little assembly where the important things in Scripture are the things that are important to us!

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

SERMON NOTES
FROM THE
SUNDAY MESSAGES

Dartmouth Bible Church 52 Morton Avenue No. Dartmouth, Mass.

Series: An Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14
Scripture: I Corinthians 14:34-40

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 14 9/18/88

THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN WORSHIP

Introduction Today we come to the end of this series on I Cor.12-14. Again, my reason for taking the time to go through these three chapters has been to give you the opportunity to hear the passage taught slowly and, hopefully, carefully. I have observed that many Christians form opinions on the meaning of Paul's words in these chapters without really carefully looking at the text. However you think and feel about spiritual gifts, you need to remember two things: 1) God is the giver of spiritual gifts; and 2) whatever gift or gifts an individual Christian has, they are to be strictly used for the benefit of the whole church assembly. When you come right down to it, God is real concerned about the "quality of care" that believers give one another in His Church. More of His churches need to realize that the internal spirit that exists within their assemblies is of highest priority in the mind of the Bridegroom.

Now today, we come to the last section in I Cor.14. "It is this passage that has caused many people to write off the Apostle Paul. They regard him as a bitter old bachelor who hated women and who was threatened by the exercise of any gifts BY women" (Ray Stedman, *Sermon on I Cor.14:26-40*, 2/18/79) But that conclusion ignores many other pictures of Paul in the New Testament, and his relationship with the women he knew. In several places Paul speaks of these individual women with respect and love and warmth and praise for their work in the ministry. To regard Paul as a woman-hating bachelor is to really miss the whole picture of the man in the New Testament. In fact in chapter 11 of this letter, he defends the right of women to pray and prophesy in the church meeting. That kind of prophesying, I believe, was the divine utterance kind. When God gave a "thus saith the Lord" kind of utterance, He chose women sometimes. I do not believe that by and large those kind of utterances are given today. The only problem, Paul says, is that women must DEMONSTRATE IN SOME WAY THAT THEY RECOGNIZE GOD'S MORAL ORDER OF LEADERSHIP, the principle of *headship* that Paul deals with at length in that chapter.

This is not a passage in the New Testament that you or I need to be embarrassed by, because the problem the Corinthian church had developed was *not* one of women ministering in the church at all; it was one of *disorder and confusion*.

What Paul Says (verses 34-38) To the Corinthian Church, and to all Christian churches, Paul says that in the public meeting of the church a woman is to keep silent in the areas of prophetic instruction and tongues.

In context, that is the rule Paul lays down, and it is simply that. Surely he does not mean that a woman could never speak at all in church. If so then she could not pray (which would be a violation of her co-priestly role with male believers), sing, testify or encourage during the worship meetings. They also couldn't say "Amen" at the end of prayers, either! Obviously, Paul has a particular situation in view, and that is if a woman is teaching or ruling over adult men in the public worship service of the church.

I Timothy 2:9-15 In this place, Paul gives similar instruction. What you get, is that in Paul's mind, Christian men and women have different roles in life, and in church order too. Men and women believers are absolutely equal in spiritual value, importance and position in the Body of Christ. But, as God has designed things, their roles are to be different. As God originally created Adam and Eve, He created Adam first, and then Eve, to be a helper to Adam--not to be His slave; but to find definition for her life in the context of Adam's purpose.

Modern man may well disbelieve this order, just as he snorts at the suggestion of there having *been* an Adam and an Eve at all. No matter. I believe it. I hope you do to.

The order of creation does not end back then, though. God intends for marriages and for church-life to reflect His designs too. And, as unpopular as it may be to believe it today, the woman has a subordinate role to the man in some things, both in the home and in the church.

Now, let's return to what Paul told the Corinthians. In the public meeting of the church, a woman is to keep silent in the areas of prophecy and tongues. That is because it is not proper for a woman to teach or to rule over adult males in the public service of the church. To have that situation is to act out something which contradicts God's order in creation. To those who struggle with that Biblical truth, I can only say that their problem is not really with Paul (or me, for that matter), it is with God. He created the world, the family and the church--not Paul, nor me.

We cannot know for sure what situation Paul was dealing with in the Corinthian church. It is clear to me that the speaking that some women were doing in the public service gave them an insubordinate role. It may have been some kind of feminist group that wanted to usurp the authority of the male leadership...

There is another detail that is important. In verse 35, Paul tells the women believers to ask questions of their husbands at home. Men and women were separated in the Jewish synagogues of Paul's day. It is very likely that this pattern was followed by the new church at Corinth, too. The women were

unable, therefore, to reach their husbands to talk with them during the service itself, to say nothing of the *disturbance* this talking might have caused. So can you see that Paul is gearing his instructions for the situation that existed? He wants to prevent a wrong use of authority, but at the same time make sure that the women ARE instructed--a notable improvement over Greek culture or even Judaism.

If you're following me so far, then maybe you're asking, "Well, so what? Prophecy and tongues are not issues in this assembly; so what relevance does it have for us?" My reply is that prophecy and tongues were authoritative pronouncements of truth and doctrine, as well as exhortation and consolation (and occasionally with prophecy, prediction). Those gifts were given by God to TELL THE LISTENER, whether believer (from prophecy) or unbeliever (from tongues), WHAT'S WHAT!

Expository preaching and teaching plays that role in the public services of evangelical churches today. "Thus saith the Lord" doesn't come by continuing revelation today; it comes from SCRIPTURE. Period. So, in order to be in-line with God's moral order of things, the pronouncement of truth and doctrine, and the exposition of Scripture are reserved for men--not men at random--men who meet other high and special qualifications, as Paul lays out carefully in a number of places. And, from this, the office of elder is restricted to men.

A little opinion, by the way: Men who are teachers and preachers ought to practice God's moral order of things too. A man who preaches and teaches doctrine should be the person whose wife, if he is married, enjoys his leadership at home and does not, in general, struggle with God's order *in* that home...

What Then, Can a Woman Do? There are still many, many things open for women to do in the church. In fact, almost everything is open, I believe. We must remember that the rule is, spiritual men are to hold authority in matters related to the doctrine or teaching of the church. When that is not the issue, let's look at the whole membership list for all the things that a church does.

A woman can teach in a lot of situations, including other women, children and teenagers. I think she can lead a discussion with men and women present, as long as it isn't predominantly a teaching role-- more along the lines of sharing and encouragement. I also think that in Christian academic circles, women can teach and instruct. That is not the public meeting of the church for worship.

I believe women can counsel in the church, sing a solo or in a group or choir, write Sunday School material, teach Sunday School, serve on different kinds of ministry teams or committees, be a treasurer or trustee, and in my opinion, serve as a deaconess, as long as the office of deacon and deaconess are understood Biblically, as an office for making sure the physical needs of the Body are being met.

I also see it that there is no reason why women believers (who are spiritual) cannot give testimonies in the public meeting, read the Word, recite a poem, give the announcements or pray.

I believe that Christian women would not feel so compelled sometimes, to take leadership roles upon themselves, if there were enough men who were spiritual and mature in the Word; and who were obedient to God's calling them to develop themselves for ministry. But for a woman to take on a man's role simply because he has *neglected* it, does not solve the problem, it compounds it...

The end of the passage has the feel to it, "Hunger for God's Word, believers." However you get it, listen to it, value it, enjoy it.

Verse 40 sums up Paul's whole concern in these chapters. It is a good rule for any aspect of church life. "Properly" has the idea of gracefulness, harmony, and even beauty. "In an orderly manner" has the meaning of "one thing at a time". The Church is to be a testimony to a hurting and confused world. It is to be a haven to which people can go to find healing and truth. Whatever you do, Paul feels, work on doing it in a graceful and harmonious way.

In studying this passage I turned to A.T. Robertson's *Word Pictures*. Robertson was probably the finest N.T. Greek scholar of this century. In reading his comments, though, it was apparent that even he was wrestling with how to apply the passage--Christians today disagree a lot about how to apply this passage in each church setting. What does God think of our applications?

Robertson's comment is a good one to remember: "It seems clear that we need to be patient with each other as we try to understand Paul's meaning here." That would honor God, however we come to understand the passage.

May the Lord Jesus Christ give us light and wisdom towards each other. May we understand the gifts He has given us, and seek to use them diligently to build each other up in the faith. May the Holy Spirit prevent us from growing cold, weary or bored with each other. May He fill us with His love for one another, and may Dartmouth Bible Church be known as a haven in North Dartmouth from the confusion and selfishness of the world.

Sources:

- Arnold, Jack. *Sermon on I Cor.14:26-40*; Grace Church, Roanoke, Va. House, Wayne. *The Speaking of Women and the Prohibition of the Law in Bibliotheca Sacra*, Jul-Sept. '88.
- MacArthur, John. *Commentary on I Corinthians*
- Robertson, A.T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*
- Stedman, Ray. *Sermon on I Cor.14:26-40*; Peninsula Bible Church, Palo Alto, CA.