

My Favorite Thing About 1st CORINTHIANS

1 Corinthians 12:4-5

November 13, 2021

Paul spent about 1 ½ years in Corinth establishing the church there. After he left, problems began to arise. The main source of the problems appears to be multiple interpretations of what it meant to live as a “*dead to sin and resurrected into a new life with Jesus*” Christian.

In about 55 AD, while he was in Ephesus, Paul wrote a letter to address the serious issues that had arisen as a result of these interpretations:

- Divisions within the church (1:10-4:21)
- Incest (5:1)
- Law suits between members (6:1-8)
- Sexual immorality (6:9-20)
- Marriage and divorce (7)
- Idolatry (8-10)
- Spiritual gifts (12-14)
- Resurrection had already occurred (15)

Which brings us to **My Favorite Thing About 1st CORINTHIANS – Spiritual Gifts**

#17 of the SDA Fundamental Beliefs states: God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions.....

In the 1st century it was generally accepted that bizarre behavior and ecstatic speech indicated a special closeness to the gods. The newly baptized Gentile Christians brought this pagan belief with them and it led to problems within the church. Those who spoke in tongues were seen as superior to those who did not. Paul addressed this issue by insisting that every believer, whatever their areas of giftedness, was equally important to the function of the body:

- **1 Corinthians 12:4-18** - Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶ And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. ⁷ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given the word of **wisdom**... and to another the word of **knowledge**...⁹ to another **faith**... to another **healing**... ¹⁰ and to another the effecting of **miracles**... to another **prophecy**... to another the **discernment**... to another *various* kinds of **tongues**... to another **interpretation**. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. ¹² For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.... ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part of the body*," ... ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part of the body*," ... ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. **{see also Ephesians 4:1-16}**

Not only does Jesus, as the **HEAD**, give life to the body, but the word picture helps us to understand how the rest fits together. There are many parts – but only **ONE** body. In this body there is strength and weakness. Where I am weak you are strong and where you are weak, I am strong. **We are better together than we are on our own.**

ALL spiritual gifts are indispensable to the success and growth – the building up – of a healthy church.

Each member has been given at least one spiritual gift.

These gifts are tools that help in the spreading of the Gospel and are not intended for our personal gain or glory.

- **1 Peter 4:10** - Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

Within the context of Spiritual Gifts, Paul turned to a more pressing matter – a lack of love:

- **1 Corinthians 13** - If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have *the gift of prophecy*, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

1st Corinthians 13 may be the best known and read chapter in Scripture. It is quoted regularly at weddings and as a romantic promise between husbands and wives. But remember the context. The church was divided over insignificant differences. They sued each other on a regular basis. They were proud of not dealing with sin in the church. They valued people who claimed the gift of tongues more highly – creating, in effect, a caste system within the church.

So, 1st Corinthians 13 is not a romantic promise so much as it is a sharp reminder that love, while not a *“spiritual gift”* in the sense that some receive it and others do not, **IS** to be the foundation of all Christian behavior. Godly love is seen in the patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, selflessness and forgiveness that should be demonstrated in the life of every Christ follower and, according to Paul, is a *“more excellent way”* of gauging spiritual maturity.

Paul didn't forbid speaking in tongues but restricted its use. He wanted the Corinthians to see that speaking in tongues was not a particularly significant spiritual gift. It caused confusion. It was not worshipful. It was self-serving. It did not build up the body of Christ. Instead, He encouraged them:

- **1 Corinthians 14:12** - since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

Peter tells us:

- But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. **{1 Peter 2:9}**

That verse applies to **ALL** who call themselves Christ followers. Therefore, we must live lives worthy of that calling and part of that calling is to work within the body of Christ, serve within the body of Christ and use whatever gift(s) we have received to build up the body of Christ.

Where do spiritual gifts come from? From God through the Holy Spirit.

What are the spiritual gifts {23}?

- Administration
- Craftsmanship
- Creative Communication
- Encouragement
- Faith
- Giving
- Helps
- Hospitality
- Intercession
- Leadership
- Mercy
- Apostleship
- Prophecy
- Evangelism
- Shepherding
- Teaching
- Discernment
- Word of Knowledge
- Word of Wisdom
- Healing
- Interpretation
- Miracles
- Languages

Why are they given? For the building up of the body of Christ.

Who are they given to? ALL believers.

God has bestowed on each one of us one or more spiritual gifts, but He does not grade us based on the gift(s), but on what we do with them:

- **Matthew 25:14-30** - Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.
¹⁶ The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.
¹⁹ "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'
²¹ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'
²² "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'
²³ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'
²⁴ "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'
²⁶ "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned, I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸ "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

If you are a member of God's family you have something to contribute. God has uniquely gifted you for the building up of this church. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? If you don't, you need to discover them – not only because you dishonor God by ignoring the gifts He's given you, but we need you – we can't be a healthy functioning body without you!

That's why **Spiritual Gifts is My Favorite Thing About 1st CORINTHIANS**.