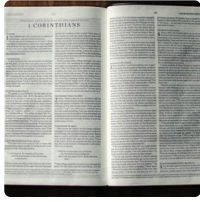


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1 Corinthians 12:1 - 10



1 Corinthians - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses 1 Corinthians 12-14, which are often cited to support the idea of supernatural gifts in the Church. While acknowledging the validity of spiritual gifts, the thrust of the discussion is on advancing spiritual maturity and love for each other. Gregg emphasizes the centrality of love in Christian practice, as well as the importance of utilizing gifts for the edification and growth of others. He notes the possibility of fake spiritual revelations and emphasizes the importance of testing prophetic utterances against the Scriptures.

Transcript

1 Corinthians 12-14 Chapters 8, 9, and 10, for example, were one continuous discussion on the subject of eating meat as a sacrifice to idols. And the middle section, or I should say the middle chapter of that section, was sort of a parenthesis where Paul went off onto the subject of his own practice of laying down his rights. Here, chapters 12, 13, and 14 are an extended discussion about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I guess we could say, although maybe that's not so much the focus that Paul intended, as we might think.

The central chapter, chapter 13, is about love and is very well known, usually called the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, though it too is part of the overall discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now, in some of the earlier chapters, Paul began his chapter by saying, now concerning, the first time he did this was in chapter 7, verse 1, now concerning the things of which you wrote to me. In chapter 8, verse 1, he said, now concerning things offered to idols.

And now in chapter 12, verse 1, he says, now concerning spiritual gifts. Now, the word gifts is in italics, which means it's not in the actual Greek. What we have in the Greek is, actually, the translation could be, now concerning spirituals.

Now, that's not very helpful in understanding what is meant there by spirituals. Obviously, spiritual is an adjective. It would ordinarily describe a noun, a spiritual gift.

A gift is a noun, spiritual would be the adjective that describes it. Here, however, the adjective is used in what they would call a substantive usage. It's a little bit like, say, if

we speak of the word dead, it's usually an adjective.

A dead cat, a dead possum, a dead person. Dead is an adjective, but if we talk about the dead, we're taking an adjective and using it as if it were a noun. The people who are dead.

The dead. And that's called the substantive use of an adjective. What we have here is also the substantive use.

The word gifts is not found in the original, nor is any noun associated with this adjective, which simply means it is a substantive. It's talking about the spiritual. And it either means spiritual gifts or spiritual people.

Now, the King James and the New King James say spiritual gifts, and I suppose, because of the discussion of the gifts that follows, many people would understand it to be the correct translation. The word in the Greek can be either neuter or it can be masculine. The same form would apply of the Greek word, whether it was intended as a masculine or as a neuter.

If it were a neuter, it might be understood to mean spiritual gifts. If a masculine, spiritual men or spiritual people. Now, it's maybe not altogether important whether we understand what is meant by this, whether it's spiritual gifts or spiritual people, but I will say that although Paul does go on to discuss gifts, it seems to me that what Paul really wants to address is what is the mark of spiritual people.

And the point he seems to be making in chapters 12, 13 and 14 is that the mark of a spiritual person is not necessarily his spiritual gifts. It seems, as I read it, that the discussion of spiritual gifts is not written here in order to advocate the use of spiritual gifts, but to regulate them and to put them in their proper perspective. Now, many people, of course, Pentecostals and Charismatics principally, appreciate these chapters because they are the only lengthy discussion that we have in the whole Bible on the subject of spiritual gifts.

And since, as the word charismatic suggests, charisma is the Greek word for gift, Charismatics are into gifts, or at least they believe in the gifts. And if you're going to believe in something and even name your movement after the thing, it helps if you can find something on the subject in the Bible. And where you find something on the subject is essentially in these chapters.

It's the only extended discussion. Now, we do have a shorter discussion of gifts in Romans 12 and in Ephesians 4. We might take a glance at those in the course of this discussion. But in these three chapters, we have the longest discussion.

And because of the interest in spiritual gifts, it is, and for those who are distinguished in the church for spiritual gifts, or for their belief in spiritual gifts, as over in contrast

against non-Charismatics who do not believe in the continuing validity of supernatural gifts today, these chapters are looked to often as an advocacy of the gifts. Now, you have to appreciate the fact that about 100 years ago in this country and for most of the church in the world, spiritual gifts of the supernatural sort were fairly sparse or unknown. Speaking in tongues was not a common phenomenon.

In fact, it was entirely unknown in this country until about the year 1900. And the absence of these gifts probably is to some extent a mark of the deadness of Christendom at that time. That Christianity had devolved into mainly a belief system only without a great deal of power.

And we know that Paul said back in chapter 4 of this book, the kingdom of God is not in word only but in power. And Paul himself, when he had come to Corinth, did not come only with words and wisdom of words, but he had come with a manifestation of power in the spirit. The church in many ages has been deficient in the area of spiritual power, certainly I think the case probably.

I mean, I wasn't around and I'm dependent on histories that have been written for my information, but it seems that that was the case in the church in the United States near the end of the 19th century, at least in some quarters of the church. About that time, a number of people began to feel the stirrings in their hearts to pray for revival, pray for fullness of the spirit in their lives. And it was in the year 1900 that certain people, while praying, experienced what they later described as a baptism of the Holy Spirit.

They spoke with tongues. This phenomenon spread. Of course, the Azusa Street revivals in Los Angeles are well known in the early part of the century for being what is usually considered the birth of the Pentecostal movement.

Along with this outpouring of the spirit's power accompanied by the gift of tongues, came a renewed interest and curiosity, of course, in the gifts in general. The gift of tongues is one of the gifts mentioned in this chapter. And as people began to look at this chapter again to seek some understanding of the area of the gifts of the spirit, they began to try to identify, of course, what is meant by the gift of prophecy in this chapter and the gift of healings and miracles and the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and discerning of spirit, which are all listed in chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians as gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And as I say, since the church at large had known little of these gifts prior to this outpouring at the turn of the century, and many people were critical of the movement, many Christians were critical of the movement because they knew no such phenomena in their church group, and they were in some cases more willing to criticize than to seek the same, those who were critical began to say, well, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, these are not for today. These were for the apostolic age. They were necessary at the time when the church was first being established.

But now that the church is a worldwide phenomenon, it's taken root powerfully in most parts of the world and to some degree, these gifts are no longer necessary. All we need now is the preaching of the gospel. And also it was taught that since the scriptures were completed, we did not need revelatory gifts such as prophecy and those kinds of things as they needed in the first century before the New Testament was complete.

They felt like the completion of the New Testament gave us all things necessary for life and godliness, and we need no more special revelations from God, whether it be by word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discerning of spirits, prophecy, tongues, or interpretation of tongues. And this began, this was sort of the backlash that the Pentecostals began to experience from those in Christendom who did not embrace the spiritual realities that they were experiencing. Now, because there was this tension between those who did and those who did not affirm the validity of the gifts today, Pentecostals have often looked to these chapters for support.

That we find here evidence that all these gifts were in the early church, and if they're, why not here? I mean, if God had use for the gifts in the first century, and if there is actually no statement in scripture that said he was going to do away with them, then why should we not see in this chapter an affirmation of these gifts, and actually a statement of what was normative in the early church, and if it is lacking in our church, then we could see this almost as a case being made for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And probably because of the environment of controversy in which the Pentecostal movement was born and the charismatic movement has spread, those who favor the gifts of the Spirit often, as I say, turn to these chapters as if these prove that Paul was advocating the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In particular, in this discussion, people often will turn to 1 Corinthians 14, verse 26.

1 Corinthians 14, verse 26, where Paul says, How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. Now, almost every charismatic teacher I've ever heard, and I've heard a great number, when speaking on this particular verse, 14, 26, they say, you see, Paul is advocating that when Christians come together, each person should be prepared to share a psalm or a teaching or a tongue or a revelation or an interpretation.

Now, I don't see Paul advocating that here. I used to, because I've been in the charismatic movement myself for about 25 years. I've been in charismatic circles.

That's 25 years ago, I was baptized in the Spirit and spoke in tongues and the rest, and I still do that. However, in those 25 years, let me put it this way, 25 years ago when I came into the charismatic movement, I was a teenager. I was dependent on my teachers to help me understand what was meant by prophecy, word of wisdom, discerning of spirits.

And this discussion in here, being a youngster myself and not having done much independent personal study, I was dependent on charismatic literature, charismatic books and teachers to help me understand these things. And so I imbibed a whole charismatic orthodoxy about these chapters, which over the 25 years of biblical study that I've conducted since then, has undergone some modification. Not modification in the sense of coming to a place of challenging whether the gifts are for today.

I have no doubt that the gifts are for today. It's simply that in the absence of a large body of biblical information on the subject, charismatics in hoping to codify and define their experiences have had to turn to these chapters and sometimes from verses that are very obscure, try to find meaning in them and put them forward as explanatory of the phenomena that charismatics have experienced. Sometimes the interpretations of some of these obscure verses, I think, have been not excellent interpretations.

I wasn't critical of them when I began in the movement, but as I've studied the Bible more, I feel that in some cases, charismatics have missed the meaning of some of the verses that are used. And one of those is 1 Corinthians 14, 26. I do not see anything in that verse that Paul is advocating the mentality he's describing.

He's describing how it is, not necessarily how it ought to be. I do not see him giving any commands or exhortations or orders here. I see him describing what their attitude is.

How is it then, brethren? He says, this is how it apparently is in Corinth. Whenever you come together, everyone has something to say. Everyone wants to get their two cents in.

Everyone wants to take the floor, at least for a portion of the meeting. Now, if we would say, well, Paul is not opposed to this, I think very likely he is, because he goes on immediately afterwards to say, listen, anyone want to speak in the tongue? Just two or three in the whole meeting. Prophets, same thing, two or three only.

Now, if the church meeting has more than, say, six people in it, which is most likely, then Paul is in fact restricting the number of people in the church who can share anything in the meeting. Suppose there were 50 people in the meeting. Is every person going to stand up and give a revelation or a teaching or a psalm or a tongue or interpretation? If so, it's going to be an extremely long meeting.

And not that I would oppose, nor necessarily Paul would oppose long meetings. It just seems to me unlikely that we would understand Paul's statement in verse 26 as advocacy of every person saying something at the meeting. And the fact that he specifically restricts speakers, even of the more important gifts, the ones he affirms as the most valuable gifts, like prophecy, he still says two or three in a meeting.

That'll be enough. So I suspect that on the one hand, these chapters help the

Charismatics. On the other hand, the Charismatics, I think, miss perhaps the main point of the discussion.

They help the Charismatics in pointing out that such gifts have been given to the church and, as far as I know, have never been taken away from the church. And therefore, if we find such gifts in operation among us, that is good. It is good, normative, and agreeable with what the New Testament phenomena were.

However, the purpose of the chapters, it seems to me, is not to affirm the gifts and to encourage the gifts. The Corinthians needed no such encouragement. It appears to me they were already very encouraged on their own in exercising the gifts.

And everything I see about the discussion, especially if we get as far as chapter 14, but we don't even have to get that far to see it, suggests that Paul is trying to put the reins on them a little bit, trying to put a few restrictions on their otherwise unrestrained eagerness to everyone participate in the meeting by showing their giftedness, showing how much they have gotten revealed to them or how much they have to offer. Now, Paul does say in chapter 14, you may all prophesy one by one. In verse 31, you can all prophesy one by one.

However, that apparently does not mean all in one meeting, because he says in verse 29, let two or three prophets speak and then let the others judge. Now, some people understand the verse of 29 through 31 saying two or three first, then judge those, and then two or three more, and then judge those, and two or three more, and judge those. Possibly it could be understood such, but I think that he says, you can all prophesy one by one.

I don't think he means everyone in the meeting is going to prophesy every time they get together, but I think what he's saying is everything doesn't have to happen in one gathering. There are things that would edify and things that would not particularly be edifying, and the main purpose of gathering is to edify one another or to build up one another. Now, just as when Paul was talking in 1 Corinthians 8 through 10 about the issue of eating meat, sacrifice, and idols, his issue was what? Edify each other.

He started out that discussion by saying, everyone has knowledge, it may be, or you may think everyone has knowledge, and you may think yourself to be of superior knowledge because you feel the liberty to eat meat, sacrifice, and idols, but knowledge puffs up, but love edifies, love builds up, and the idea is not to do everything you can justify doing yourself, but rather to seek to edify your brother, to seek to edify other people, and he closes his discussion in 1 Corinthians 10. Similarly, he says in verse 23, all things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful to me, but not all things edify.

Paul's concern is that Christians, when they, the way they live their lives with reference

to each other, whether in meetings or in their ordinary eating habits, that they be concerned to edify one another. The word edify means to build up. It's quite clear in chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians that this is his principal concern with reference to the gifts.

He says in chapter 14, verse 4, he who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied, for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues, unless indeed he interprets that the church may receive edification. Now, this discussion about the gifts is very much like, in its principal concern, the discussion about eating meat sacrificed to idols in chapters 8-10.

Namely, everyone in Corinth has a tendency to want to do his own thing, exhibit his own liberty, showcase his own giftedness and so forth. But really, the bottom line of Christianity is just loving one another, looking out for one another, seeking to build up one another. And whether it's in terms of what you decide to eat or not eat, or whether it's in terms of the way you exercise your gift, the issue is going to be, are you loving? And in the center of this discussion, as I pointed out a moment ago, is chapter 13, which is all about love.

And it begins in the opening verses of chapter 13, though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, I have a tremendous gift of tongues, but have not loved, I have become a sounding breath or clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and knowledge, and though I have all faith, all of these are gifts mentioned in chapter 12, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I'm nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Obviously, what Paul's trying to say here is gifts are great, but love is the real mark of spirituality. Love is the thing God is most concerned with. God never gave commands that I should prophesy or speak with tongues, though he may have no objection to my doing, so he never commanded me to, but he did command me to love.

The one thing that's foremost in God's concern, and the thing that is truly the mark of spiritual men and women, is their love and their obsession with edifying each other, of building up each other. When a person is self-obsessed, concerned about their own individuality, their own specialness, their own giftedness, their own rights, their own whatever, these people, they may be calling themselves spiritual men, and I suspect in Corinth they were. Human nature is no different now than it was then, and I will say that in Charismatic and Pentecostal circles, which is the circles I've mainly been in for the past quarter of a century, it's fairly normal for people to consider giftedness to be exhibited in terms, I should say to consider spirituality to be exhibited in terms of giftedness.

That if a person can prophesy or have a word of knowledge or heals the sick or

whatever, that that person is therefore considered to be spiritual. And you don't have to be very long in the movement to discover that that ain't necessarily so, that sometimes people with the most remarkable and sensational gifts are not particularly spiritual in those measured by the standards that the Bible gives of real measure of spirituality, like holiness, love, these issues. Many times people with great gifts prove to be not very holy, not very loving, not very honest.

And for that reason, I think what Paul is doing at the beginning of this chapter is saying, now concerning spiritual, spiritual what? I suspect the discussion is really about spiritual men. What constitutes a spiritual person? Sure, he goes on and talks about gifts, but only because I think the Corinthians, like many Charismatics, had a tendency to consider a person a spiritual man because he had such and such a gift. And so he goes on and talks about the gifts, trying to put them in their perspective, which throughout the discussion is below love.

Love is most important. Gifts have value. I'm certainly not going to side with the non-Charismatics who say, well, you can have the gifts of the Spirit, we'll take the fruit of the Spirit, which is love.

To me, to suggest a dichotomy like that where, well, you can only have one or the other is just plain silly. I mean, if the Bible talks about the Holy Spirit being the common inheritance of us all, the mark of Christ's ownership upon us is the seal of God, is that we have the Holy Spirit, why should it be that we cannot have both, the fruits and the gifts of the Holy Spirit? Obviously, if we were to choose between the two, I do believe that the fruit of the Spirit, which Paul lists in Galatians 5, 22 and 23, the fruit of the Spirit is more essential to the Christian life. That is to say, the fruit of the Spirit is really what the Holy Spirit desires most to produce in our lives, love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, self-control, goodness, patience, both things.

But that is in no sense saying that he doesn't also gift us and want to have us involved in the anointed spiritual supernatural ministry that comes with giftedness in special ways. So I certainly believe in both, the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. But if Paul has a basic message that comes through in all three of these chapters in this discussion, it's this, the gifts of the Spirit are worthless if they're not governed by the fruit of the Spirit, which is love.

You can have the gift of tongues, miracles, healings, whatever you want, but if you have not love, it is nothing. It's not just less than what it ought to be, it's nothing. The gifts are zero without love.

Now love without gifts, I'd say if a person has love but no gifts, the person is the poorer for it. Love is great and gifts are great too. And if a person is loving but has no gift, then we could say they don't count for nothing because love is the most important thing, but they're the poorer for not being gifted.

But if a person has gifts and no love, that person has nothing. It's zero, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13. It counts for nothing at all.

So what I understand him to be trying to correct here is not that the Corinthians were a little too reticent about the gifts, like the modern non-charismatic church might be keeping the gifts at arm's length or further. They wouldn't touch them with a ten-foot pole. And therefore Paul had to write to them to encourage the use of the gifts.

Not so. The Corinthians already were encouraged enough about it without Paul helping them along. What he was trying to say is gifts are wonderful, but if they are not governed by love, then they are worthless.

Totally worthless. So the bottom line is spirituality is not measured so much by gifts. It is measured by love.

And so it is not really so much a discussion just about spiritual gifts, it's about spirituality in general. What is spirituality? What is the standard by which it is measured? And so I think that as he opens the first verse of chapter 12, now concerning spiritual what? I think spiritual people. Now concerning what spirituality is in a man.

What is a spiritual man? Now the Church of Corinth had its own assumptions about that. Gifts apparently played some kind of role in their assessment of a person's spirituality. But again, there was also that business of gnosis, knowledge, wisdom, and Sophia.

These things that were part of the Greeks' way of assessing someone's spirituality as well. Paul is telling us it's neither knowledge nor giftedness, it's love. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

Some forms of gifts tend to only edify the individual using them. But the gifts that are best and most desirable are those that edify others, because they are an expression of love. Not so much to build me up, but to build my brother up is what love motivates me to do.

Now, let's get into the passage. Begin in verse 1 of chapter 12. Now concerning spiritual somethings.

Brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that you were Gentiles carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus a cursed, and no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. There are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

Paul begins by reminding them that prior to their conversion, they were idolaters, and that is obviously the case. They were Greeks. Greeks, Romans, everyone except Jews were idolaters if they were not Christians.

And since before Paul came to Corinth to preach the gospel, no one had done so before him. They were all pagans. They were all idol worshippers when Paul met them for the first time.

Although, of course, that changed with their conversion. But what he's saying is there is a marked contrast between religion as you used to know it, and religion that you are now a part of. Namely this, that the idols you worshipped were dumb.

And he's not just trying to be abusive with that term. He means mute. He means they didn't talk.

They weren't alive. Living gods speak. And by the way, the non-charismatic sometimes forgets this.

They feel that God used to speak. God spoke through the prophets. He spoke to Moses.

He revealed himself in many ways in biblical times, even in the New Testament through Jesus and the apostles and so forth. The Holy Spirit spoke through people. Prophecies were given.

Revelations were given. But once the Bible was completed, we don't need that anymore. God lapsed into silence.

Although God shows himself to be a speaking God, a living and communicating God, throughout everywhere in the Bible, the strange assumption has entered into the church that when God gave us the whole New Testament, he just decided that he was weary of speaking, I suppose. He had nothing more to say. And therefore he hasn't spoken a word since.

There are some non-charismatic Christians who take this to greater extremes than others. Possibly the greatest extreme I've ever seen is among the Jehovah's Witnesses, who of course are not Christians at all, but they deal with this subject too. They believe, of course, that the gifts are no longer for today as well.

And they go so far as to say, God doesn't speak to you in any way. In fact, I've met some fairly extreme dispensationalists in this very town. One guy who had a meeting in his home for a while, whom I had over as a guest in my home once, and we discussed this very thing.

He and his wife, they made it very clear they have nothing but disdain for the suggestion that a Christian would hear anything from God. They ridiculed people, saying, well, you

know, I think the Lord showed me this or the Lord told me that, or the Lord led me to do this. There's no room for that in their theology.

God doesn't do that anymore, even though it's the most common thing in the narratives of Scripture for people being hearing from God and getting revelations. He's a speaking God, yet they consider he's now taken on a role much more like the dumb idols that the pagans used to worship. They don't talk, and I guess God doesn't talk anymore to these people.

But I believe that God, it's in his nature to speak and to communicate. And I think what Paul is suggesting here is that the Corinthians, having previously worshipped gods that don't speak, have an adjustment in their thinking to make now, because they now are children of a God who will be talking to them. He will be communicating to the church.

And he doesn't generally do so with an audible booming voice from heaven, although on rare occasions he did that in the life of Jesus and in the Old Testament. But most of the ways that God has spoken in the past is through prophets or through spokesmen in some form. The word prophecy, although it's listed later on in this chapter as one of several gifts, yet the word prophecy is also a far more broadly functional word that speaks of people getting words from God, and there's a sense in which even a tongue could be regarded as a prophecy.

Not so much in this discussion, because Paul makes a contrast between tongues and prophecy. But on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit fell and they were all speaking with tongues, Peter said, this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel, who said in the last days, I'll pour out my Spirit and your sons and daughters shall prophesy. Well, we don't read that anyone was prophesying in the sense that we think of that word different than tongues.

They were speaking in tongues. But even that was a revelatory thing, a supernatural utterance gift, and I think fell under the general rubric of prophecy. The word prophecy is used more than one way in the Bible, and in this particular chapter, and in chapter 14, I believe prophecy is seen as more of a narrow gift in contrast to some other revelatory type gifts.

You'll find that the list of gifts that we've not yet read in this chapter, but comes up a few verses from now, is heavily weighted with gifts that have to do with God talking. Now, not all of the gifts that are listed are about God speaking to us. Miracles and healings and so forth might have little or nothing to do with God speaking, although of course miracles and healings are part of God's revelation of himself, sort of his body language as it were, part of his whole discourse with man.

But many of the gifts are all about God showing someone something or speaking to something, a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom, discerning of spirits, tongues,

interpretation of tongues, prophecy. What's that, six of the nine gifts here? So as I say, the word of God is not just a word of God, but a word of God. And Paul seems to be trying to point out that unlike the gods of the heathen, whom the Corinthians used to worship, who don't talk, God does talk.

And when he does talk, it's usually not directly by an audible voice, but often through people whom he gifts, to whom he reveals what he has to say, and they say it to the church in various ways, through the expression of various gifts. Now, one of the problems with this mode of communication is that it's susceptible to fakery. It is possible for a person to say, thus saith the Lord, and then say something that isn't at all what the Lord saith.

That they don't have any real revelation from God at all, one possibility is that they think they do and they're making something up that they just feel strongly about, but it's not really something from the Lord, they just think it is. Another is that it's an outright fakery, they know it's not from the Lord, but they have some agenda, and therefore they're pretending. And another possibility is that they have some kind of spiritual counterfeit, an actual supernatural revelation, but not from God.

Now this presents new challenges to the Corinthians, they didn't have to worry so much about when they were worshipping dumb idols that didn't say anything. You never had to worry about whether an utterance was really from one of those gods or not, they don't ever speak. The true God, however, does speak, and therefore there must be some canon or methodology for knowing how to discern when it's Him and when it's not Him.

And that's the first thing that Paul addresses in verse 3, Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. Now I don't know that anyone in Corinth was actually saying Jesus is accursed, and Paul's statement here may be using extreme language in order to illustrate a point. I mean to say no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit of God, this is not literally and absolutely true.

In conversation with demonized people, I've been able to hear them say Jesus is Lord if you ask them to confess it. They say it in mockery, but many Christians hoping to discover whether a person has a demon or not would say, can you say Jesus is Lord? And sometimes they can. But what they have is that the Holy Spirit is still demonic.

The demons themselves when they met Jesus, they didn't call Him Lord, they called Him the Son of the Highest, the Son of the Blessed. They made right confessions about Him. The problem was, of course, it wasn't really, He wasn't their Lord in the sense of their willing submission to Him.

Paul is basically saying that when the Holy Spirit is speaking, He will certainly not be belittling Jesus. He will not be saying, in effect, Jesus is accursed. The Holy Spirit will

always be affirming the Lordship of Jesus, always affirming and lifting up and glorifying Jesus.

Whether the exact statement, Jesus is accursed or Jesus is Lord, whether Paul is aware of anyone saying those things through the power of the Spirit, or whether he's just giving categories. A person who's really speaking about the Spirit isn't going to be saying things belittling or insulting to Jesus. They're going to be saying things that exalt Jesus, that establish and affirm His Lordship.

That's essentially the test, I think, that is given here. Over in 1 John 4, where he's warning believers not to succumb to the deception of false prophets, he gives a similar test. 1 John 4, beginning with verse 1, says, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

By this you know the Spirit of God, every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. Now, the wording of this confession in 1 John is basically to show that a person who is a follower of Dostatism, which was a form of Gnosticism, could not be speaking by the Spirit of God. Dostatism taught that Jesus was never come in the flesh.

He was an ethereal spirit-type being that never had physical substance. It was one of the two branches of Gnosticism, Corinthianism and Dostatism. But John seems to be saying, any dissetic person who claims to be speaking by the Spirit is not speaking by the Spirit if they're denying that Jesus has come in the flesh.

Now, I do think that demonized people and people who don't have the Spirit can utter the words, Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Actually, I could probably ask any unbeliever who lives on this block, do you think Jesus Christ came in the flesh? And if that means did he come in a physical body, they'd probably say, yeah. They believe he was a historical person.

But in the context, what John is suggesting is true doctrinal understanding of Jesus is part and parcel with true prophecy. It's not going to be theologically incorrect. It's not going to have an improper Christology.

True prophecy of the Holy Spirit is going to say true and good things about Jesus. And any spirit that says things that are not true or not good about Jesus certainly is not the Spirit of God. And John says that's how we can test the Spirit by exactly what role does Jesus have in the utterance.

Is Jesus being glorified or is Jesus being belittled? Now, verses 4 through 6 which we read are possibly more or less three synonymous statements. It's almost impossible, if it's

possible at all, to distinguish between what Paul means by gifts, ministries, and activities in these three verses. They, in a sense, would clearly overlap, and in Paul's mind they might even be synonymous.

He does, in each case, attribute these things, however, to a different person of the Godhead. There are diversities of gifts with the same Spirit, differences of ministries with the same Lord, meaning Jesus, and there are diversities of activities with the same God. You've got God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit mentioned.

Paul, if we try to say, okay, now the gifts are related to the Spirit, but the ministries are related to the Lord, and the activities to God, we'll probably end up trying to make artificial and unreliable distinctions between these things. In the Greek, the words are often used somewhat interchangeably with each other. So, to summarize verses 4 through 6, Paul is essentially saying the gifts and activities and ministries of God are from the same God, the Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

The same triune God is working through all these different ministries, insofar as we're talking about genuine ones. Verse 7, but the manifestation of the Spirit, and manifestation means revealing or the disclosure. He's referring here to gifts of the Holy Spirit, but he calls them manifestations of the Spirit.

When the Spirit reveals His presence through a supernatural gifting, these manifestations of the Spirit are given to each one for the profit of all. Now, he's going to expand a little more on that a little later, how the gifts are for the profit of all, not just for the individual who's gifted. The purpose of the gifts is not just to make you richer spiritually for it, but for you to make others richer, to profit the whole body, and that of course is his basic thesis for these chapters.

Now he gives us something like a list of gifts. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one in the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as he wills.

Now, we could spend the rest of our time on these few verses just going through and defining what each of these gifts is, and making some corrections on what probably are misunderstandings that have entered into the conventional teachings on the subject, even among charismatics. I don't want to take the rest of our time doing that, but I do want to say something about it. First of all, there are two ways of looking at this list in general.

One is to say that certain individuals have each of these gifts, that there is somebody whose gift is the word of knowledge. When that person comes to the meeting, you can

count on it. If they speak, they're probably going to give a word of knowledge because that's their gift.

If they don't have another gift, that's their gift. Another person, an entirely different person, has a word of wisdom, and this gift resides in them. And if you need a word of wisdom, they're the guy to go to, or to look to.

Likewise, gifts of healings and miracles and prophecy and so forth, that these gifts are associated with certain individuals permanently. That as a result of being saved and baptized in the Spirit, there are certain people who are prophetically gifted, or gifted in tongues, or in healing, or something like that. And therefore, they have this gift in no other.

Or maybe we shouldn't put it quite so exclusively, because there are clearly people who have more than one gift. But Paul would essentially be saying that in the church, you're not likely to find all the gifts operating in one person. To one is given this gift, to another this gift, to another that gift.

And another way of looking at it that I've heard expressed before is that he's not talking about gifts being resident in particular individuals, but that at any given meeting, one person might give a prophecy, one person might give a word of wisdom, one person might give a word of knowledge, one person might discern the Spirit, and so forth. But at a different meeting, those might be offered up by different people. The person who prophesied last meeting might say nothing this meeting, or might give a word of wisdom.

The person who interpreted a tongue last meeting might say nothing this meeting, or might never again interpret a tongue, but in some future meeting might work a miracle, or give a word of knowledge, or something like that. Now, what would be in view here, if that were the correct understanding, is Paul's just talking about a particular meeting, not so much permanently residential gifts in each person, but at any given meeting, one person might be given a word of wisdom. Another person might be given a word of knowledge.

All these things might happen in a given gathering, and they won't all happen from one person. They'd happen through God working through a variety of people. Now, which of these views is correct? I don't know if we can say with certainty which is.

Obviously, depending on which view we take about this, it'll affect the way we look at our own giftedness. Many people have told me that they've got a gift of discernment. A fair number of those people, I think, really have just a gift of suspicion, and I've never really been impressed with the real spirituality of people who boast about their gift of discernment.

But what they mean by that is there is residential in them a permanent gift of discernment, and that if you need something discerned, call on them, because they've got a somewhat better sense of that than other people, because they're gifted with it. This concept might be what people would derive from the first suggestion, that one person has a gift of prophecy. Anytime you need a prophecy, you can call that person up, and they're likely to get one for you, because they've got this gift.

Now, that is a possible meaning. On the other hand, if the other meaning were true, it would mean that I don't have any one particular gift, but I have the Holy Spirit, who is capable of doing any of these things. And on any given occasion, as need arises, the Holy Spirit might exercise in any of these ways, or a number of others that aren't in this list, through me or any other individual.

Now, obviously that makes a very big difference in the way I perceive my own usefulness, and my own job description, and my own giftedness, and so forth. And I do not know which is the correct way of understanding it, but I will say this. Possibly in favor of the first of those two interpretations, namely that certain individuals have permanently residing gifts in them that are always the same gift and the same person, you've got later on in the same chapter a list of gifts in verses 28 through 30, actually a couple of different lists.

You can see it another way. He says, and God has appointed these in the church, this is 1228, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? The suggestion being that the answer is no to all those questions.

Now, one thing I'd point out to you, that especially the expression apostles, prophets, and teachers, workers of miracles, and so forth, does suggest that there are individuals who have these gifts resident in them. Some are prophets. Now, it's possible that the gift of prophecy might be functioning through someone who is not regarded as a prophet.

Since Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14, you may all prophesy, but he suggests that not all are prophets. It is possible that a person might speak in tongues, a being who that's not their principle and continuous gifting. But it does seem like some people are workers of miracles.

It seems like some people are prophets. Some people are teachers. And that there is, in each individual, some gift residing somewhat permanently.

Although it's possible that a person's giftedness or usefulness may even change in the course of their lifetime. We have, for example, in Acts 13.1, the statement that there were five men in the church of Antioch who were said to be prophets and teachers. Now,

we don't know whether some of them were prophets and some were teachers.

It just says there were certain prophets and teachers in the church, and it gives a list of five names of which Paul and Barnabas are among them. Before that chapter is through, Paul and Barnabas are also referred to as apostles. So, here we have apostles who are probably also among those who were prophets and teachers.

Now, Paul says he gave first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, as if those are different gifts, but quite obviously more than one could reside in an individual, and a person who operated principally in the gift of prophecy in his early Christian life might operate as an apostle later on, conceivably. I mean, at least in Paul's case, we find his apostleship is what he calls upon most often for the authority of what he says, rather than his prophetic gifting. So, anyway, these are just some possibilities.

But let's try to decide what is meant by these things. In 1 Corinthians 12, verses 8-10, we have listed nine gifts of the Spirit. Now, it's way over simplistic to suggest that there are therefore nine gifts of the Spirit, and only nine.

There are seven gifts of the Spirit listed in Romans chapter 12, and maybe we'll just look real quickly there, although we don't want to expound on Romans, but just so we'll get the big picture of what Paul says on gifts, comparing two different letters where he spoke on the subject. Romans 12, verses 6-8, he says, having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them in prophecy, let us prophesy and propose to our faith, our ministry, let us use it in our ministering. Ministry means service.

He who teaches in teaching, he who gives with liberality, which is generosity. He who leads with diligence, and he who shows mercy with cheerfulness. You'll notice that in this list, then, there are seven gifts listed.

Prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading and showing mercy. Of those seven, only one is found in 1 Corinthians 12, namely prophecy. There is no further overlapping between the list in 1 Corinthians 12 and the list in Romans 12.

Only prophecy is on both lists and nothing else is. Which means that we could possibly extend the list, if we wanted to combine them, to a total of 15 gifts. But even that wouldn't exhaust it.

What I think we have to understand is that in each of these places, Paul is giving a sampling of what he means when he speaks of gifts, but he's not giving an exhaustive list. In any case, there are perhaps innumerable different gifts. The word *charismata*, gifts, or *charisma* in the singular, this word is used for a wide variety of things, all of which suggest something that is a gift of God's grace.

And some of them, nine of them, are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12. In this first list,

some of the others are in the second list in 1 Corinthians 12, which we read a moment ago. They are all apostles, prophets, teachers, helps, administrations.

The list there in 1 Corinthians 12, 28, it overlaps but goes beyond the list that's earlier in the same chapter. Because here in 1 Corinthians 12, 28, he adds teaching, which is in the Romans list, but not in the earlier 1 Corinthians list. He adds helps, which is probably what Paul means in Romans 12, by ministry, gift of service, helps.

And the gift of administrations in verse 28 here, probably is the same gift he's referring to as the gift of ruling in Romans 12. So we have different combinations of gifts each time Paul lists them. But the suggestion, I think, should be made that all of them are gifts of essentially different manifestations of the Spirit.

Now there are those who teach, and it's very popular today, to speak as if the gifts that are listed in 1 Corinthians 12 are what they call ministry gifts, whereas the gifts in Romans 12 are what they call motivational gifts. How many of you have heard that distinction made before? Motivational gifts versus ministry gifts. Well, motivational gifts, sometimes to determine what your motivational gift is, they give out gift evaluation tests that you take, and it's a little bit like personality evaluations or personality testing or whatever.

And they say a person who has a gift of giving, that's their motivation, then they're going to have these characteristics. A person whose gift is in teaching is going to have different characteristics in prophecy than another, and so forth. And they don't think so much of Romans 12 and those gifts of mercy and giving and helps and so forth that are there, they don't think so much of those as supernatural manifestations of the Spirit, so much as almost a resident disposition or underlying motivation that works through people.

This is, I think, what Bill Gothard teaches, and I think some charismatics teach it as well. He's not charismatic, but some would say that the gifts in Romans 12 are motivation gifts, in 1 Corinthians 12 we have something altogether different. I don't think so.

First of all, the expression motivation gifts is not found in scripture, it's artificial to add these adjectives to it. Both places speak of gifts as the same term, charisma or charismata, both passages use the same word, and prophecy is on both lists. And to suggest that the gift of prophecy in Romans 12 is not the same thing as the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 12 is to make an outlandish assertion in the absence of any scriptural, exegetical reason for saying so.

It strikes me that Paul, in his own mind, if he had been pressed to, could have listed maybe 20 or more gifts, and he even speaks in 1 Corinthians 10 of singleness as a gift and marriage as a gift. Charisma is the word used there too. A gift of grace.

God's grace is manifesting, giving us all kinds of wonderful things, but whatever they are, they're for the use of edifying the body of Christ and serving one another. Now, what is the meaning of these particular gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12? 25 years ago, when I first came into the charismatic movement, I read charismatic books and I got under my belt pretty standard, charismatically orthodox ideas of what is meant by these things. A word of wisdom, as I understood it, was a supernaturally inspired revelation of what to do in a situation where wisdom was called for.

Maybe something like what Solomon had when the two prostitutes were fighting over the same baby. That really required something more than just human ingenuity. It required divine wisdom to know what to do.

Solomon came up with the thing, let's cut the baby in two, which obviously he didn't intend to do, but it revealed the thoughts and intents of the hearts of the two women and disclosed who the true mother was. The Bible says of that story that from that time on, this story and others like it, taught Solomon's wisdom to be arranged far and wide. He became famous throughout the world for his wisdom because of this decree he made, which clearly was a brilliant decree.

Jesus, when he was confronted about whether to pay tribute to Caesar or not, was facing a bit of a dilemma. Because if he said yes, he would alienate the Jews because they didn't like him to pay tribute to Caesar. And if he said no, he would, of course, make himself a troublemaker in the eyes of the Romans, who insisted that the Jews should pay tribute and it would give his enemies something to accuse him of.

Instead, he instantly came up with what some would call a word of wisdom. He just said, well, show me the coin. Whose face was on the coin? That's Caesar's face.

Give to Caesar what is his and give God what is his. Jesus was brilliant at getting out of seemingly inescapable situations verbally, just coming up with a brilliant response that silenced his enemies. Some would say this was the operation of the gift of the word of wisdom in Jesus.

Now, the word of knowledge is considered to be, in charismatic circles, similar to that. It's like an instantly, spontaneously revealed bit of information. A little different than wisdom.

Wisdom is the application of knowledge. Wisdom is knowing what to do, what the wise course of action would be. Whereas knowledge is just knowing facts.

Knowledge is just having the information. Generally, throughout the charismatic movement, it is believed that the word of knowledge is getting a revelation of some information about somebody. This can be anything from somebody over in this half of the room is getting healed of cancer right now.

Real vague kind of stuff. In a room full of millions of people. Someone back here has been having problems with your knee.

I think God wants you to know that he's going to heal your knee. Well, in a room of 10,000 people, certainly there's going to be a fair number of people on both sides of the room that have problems with knees. Sometimes it's that vague.

Other times I've been told. I have a friend who was in a Pentecostal church when he first got saved many years ago. He said that the preacher had such a gift of word of knowledge that he could say, woman up there, seven rows from the back, you have green eyes, black hair.

Your husband's name is George. He works down at General Motors. You drive such and such car and your income is so much.

God wants you to know this about you. He gives them a word. Of course, that kind of sensational so-called word of knowledge has been featured in a lot of big time charismatic ministries, especially healing ministries.

That kind of word of knowledge usually is associated in our minds with healing campaigns. Someone will say, well, God has shown me that someone over here is being healed of this. Someone over here is being healed of that.

Of course, some of the more dramatic ones have been provably frauds. As you probably know, there was one guy on TV who was giving that kind of information about people. It turned out that his wife was transmitting through a hidden transmitter in his ear.

She was transmitting information about these people to him and he was speaking as if it was coming to him by revelation. Now, I certainly do not want to suggest that such insights do not genuinely come by revelation. They do.

When Peter confronted Ananias and Sapphira about their having lied to the Holy Spirit, no one had informed him, as near as we can tell, of their treachery. But the Holy Spirit showed him that. And he knew that they had done something that they were not confessing to and that no one else knew.

That, we could argue, was a word of knowledge. When Jesus said, that is of the sort that the charismatic usually understand the term. When Jesus said to the woman at the well, she said, I have no husband.

He said, you've had five husbands and the man you're with now is not your husband. That would be another example of what is usually considered to be a word of knowledge. However, when Jesus said that to the woman, she said, sorry, perceive you're a prophet.

I'd like to suggest to you that that phenomenon that I've been describing, which

charismatics call word of knowledge, might not be what Paul means by word of knowledge. When that happens genuinely, that might simply be prophesying. At least that's what it's called by the woman at the well.

And I have a feeling, you see, you've got people like Elisha, when his servant Gehazi went out secretly to get a reward for naming the Syrian. And as he was coming back after he'd hid the stuff, he was coming back to Elisha's house and Elisha knew what he'd done. He said, I saw you going out to meet the chariot and so forth.

And we call that a word of knowledge, but that was just part of the prophetic ministry of Elisha. The whole phenomenon of being able to know things about people, like Jesus did about the woman at the well or like Peter did, could, I mean, as far as we know, could be more subsumed under the general heading of prophecy rather than be what Paul is referring to as a word of knowledge. What I need to point out to you about the difficulty of understanding what Paul means by word of wisdom and word of knowledge is that these expressions, the exact expressions are not found anywhere else in Scripture.

We do not have, for example, the phenomenon I've been describing somewhere else in Scripture called word of knowledge or word of wisdom. We see the phenomena, but we don't have them labeled that way. And we don't know whether it's those phenomena that Paul's referring to or not when he talks about word of wisdom, word of knowledge.

I believe in those phenomena. I believe that still happens today. I'm not sure, though, whether that's simply a function of prophecy and maybe Paul had another phenomenon in mind when he spoke of word of wisdom or word of knowledge.

I would suggest to you also that the expression word of wisdom, word of knowledge, those expressions can be translated utterance of wisdom or utterance of knowledge. Let me show you some cross references that might suggest maybe another interpretation of those and might suggest Paul is pointing to some other function in the life of the believer or in the life of the believing community when he talked about a word of wisdom or word of knowledge. Look over at Proverbs 19:27.

Proverbs 19:27. It says cease listening to instruction my son and you will stray from the words of knowledge. Now, how do we understand words of knowledge here? Words characterized by knowledge.

I mean, words that are not ignorant words, but knowledgeable words. Now, words of knowledge is an expression that if a Hebrew is actually that that simply means words that give some information, words, words that are that are characterized by knowledge. They're not ignorant words.

Look over at Proverbs twenty three in verse twelve. Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge. In other words, listen to instruction.

Listen to words that have knowledge in them from which you can get knowledge. Now, knowledge in this case doesn't necessarily have to be revelatory knowledge. It can just be knowledge of whatever knowledge of God's word or knowledge of truth of some sort.

And word of knowledge doesn't necessarily have to mean something revealed. It can mean something that is words that come forth from somebody who possesses a deposit of knowledge within them. And when they speak, they speak knowledgeably.

And words of wisdom could easily have the same meaning. Words, you know, utterances that that convey wisdom, which could be what we think of as a typical, you know, what we usually think of as a word wisdom, but maybe not. Maybe just means anyone's words if they are wise words.

In Proverbs twenty three, since you're already there. Proverbs twenty three nine says, Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words. Your wisdom, the wisdom of your words suggests perhaps that your words were words of wisdom.

Words that contain wisdom would be words of wisdom. And if we would divorce ourselves momentarily just for the sake of testing this out, we divorce ourselves from the typical charismatic way of describing a word of wisdom or word of knowledge and just look at the expressions. To one is given a word of wisdom.

To another is given a word of knowledge. That is, you know, a knowledgeable word. It may be that these gifts that Paul is referring to, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, are not so much revelatory gifts at all.

Now, once again, this is just a labeling question. I'm not doubting that what we usually think of as a word of wisdom or word of knowledge in the charismatic sense of that usage, I'm not doubting that those phenomena exist, although those might be more part of the different prophecy. But I'm just saying maybe Paul has something else in mind when he uses these particular expressions.

He may be saying that when people share in the church meeting, there will be people whose words convey important knowledge from God, whose words convey wisdom and insight and guidance and so forth from God. This is a function of the Holy Spirit in the church, so that among the things that he lists in 1 Corinthians 14, 26, which we read earlier, 14, 26. How is it then, brethren, whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation.

Now, teaching and revelation are two different things. Hopefully when a person gives a teaching, their utterance will have knowledge in it and maybe wisdom too, although maybe someone who gives an exhortation might be giving wisdom more, more counsel to the church and teaching would be more informational. It's hard to say, but notice Paul

makes a distinction in 1 Corinthians 14, 26 between the person who is teaching and the person who is giving something that he got by revelation.

A teacher, his task is to repeat what he knows, usually from study and from having learned in the normal way, although that doesn't remove the need for an anointing of God to make the teaching a spiritual dynamic. I mean, a prophecy and a teaching are different things. Both of them are ways by which we hope God shall speak to us, but the teacher has done some research and hopes for the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the gifting of the Holy Spirit to make that come through with power when he speaks.

The prophet doesn't have to do any research to prophesy, he just gets it. The prophecy comes to him, the word of the Lord comes to him, and it's a different kind of gifting. It's interesting that later in the passage, in chapter 12, he lists the gift of teaching in verse 28 and in verse 29, but he doesn't in this earlier list unless a word of knowledge and or a word of wisdom might be subsumed under the general category of teaching.

It's possible. It's not certain, but it's possible. Utterances that contain wisdom, utterances that contain knowledge, and that convey the same to the listener could be the function of teaching.

And it may not be that Paul is referring to these more supernatural, revelatory things that we often attach these labels to, although he would know of those phenomena, but under another category or under another name. I'm only making this suggestion because in the years that I've been in the movement, I've had reason to question whether we have very strong exegetical reasons for the definitions that we typically accept without question. There isn't much outside of verse 8 of chapter 12 of the first Corinthians to go on as to what is meant by these terms, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, unless it's the most natural meaning of all.

Words, utterances that contain wisdom and that contain knowledge, with or without a special revelation. You see, that no revelation is necessary for some of these gifts, doesn't make them any less gifts. Because even the gift of helps and the gift of giving are gifts of the Holy Spirit.

But what do you need to give? You need money. What do you need to help? You need some kind of skill or some kind of usefulness, some availability. But how then are these spiritual gifts? They are gifts in that God calls you to take those things that he's given you and to minister for the edification of others.

In giving, in helps, in teaching or whatever. In many cases there's no obvious supernatural element except perhaps the anointing of the Holy Spirit which makes it an edifying service to the body of Christ. In any case, I just want to put out to you the possibility that word of wisdom, word of knowledge, the first two things on this list are maybe not what we sometimes immediately think of if we've been trained in charismatic

circles.

The same is true when we come to verse 9, "...to another faith by the same Spirit, and another the gifts of healings by the same Spirit." Now faith here does not refer to saving faith because he's obviously referring to a gift of faith as something some Christians have as opposed to some other gift that they have. The gift of faith here is not the common gift that all Christians have of believing in Christ for salvation. And it's not at all certain what it does mean.

Most understand it to mean, and I will not challenge this by the way, most understand this to mean just exceptional faith more than the ordinary, more than one can account for based on the amount of spiritual growth they've had. You know, you should be growing in faith all the time. Faith is something that you have from the time you're born again or else you wouldn't be born again.

But as you walk with the Lord, you grow in faith. You grow in these areas. Nonetheless, there are times when a circumstance requires more than ordinary faith.

That a person who is a baby Christian may need enough faith to move an actual mountain. In which case, the faith that comes to them is more of a special anointing of the Holy Spirit, a special God-given gift that comes to them that is not just part of a growing fruit of faith in their life. And I don't know that that's what Paul means, but we don't have any other explanatory words from Paul to tell us what he means by a gift of faith.

It's possible also that, well, I don't know, that living by faith in a special sense, the way that George Mueller did, the way that Reese Howells and Hudson Taylor did, that that might be something not everyone can do or should do. Not everyone is called to live by faith on the edge of disaster day by day the way that some people are called to do. Those who do can bring glory to God in that life, but it shouldn't be said that everyone must live that way.

Maybe that's a special gifting. Which doesn't mean that other people shouldn't be able to trust God all the time, but it may mean that some people's gifting is to live by faith in an exceptional way and to trust God in ways that other people would not be inclined to or are not required to on a daily basis. I don't know.

But now we come to gifts of healings and in verse 10, the working of miracles. Now, I'll tell you, I've changed my view on this a little bit, or at least I've been willing to entertain some alternative views to that which I used to think. I used to think that gifts of healings and working of miracles were similar to each other in this respect.

That a person who had a gift of healing was one who healed other people. They worked healings. And a worker of miracles was a person who worked miracles of another sort

than healings.

Now, some would ask, well, aren't healings miracles? I would have said, well, a healing is a restoration to health, which might conceivably happen through natural means if there was no miracle, but a miracle would speed it up. I mean, a person's got the flu, a person's got some kind of disease, which in some cases might heal itself. The body might eventually heal itself, but simply healing speeds it up and instantaneously gives that, which would otherwise take a long time for the body to do itself.

Whereas a miracle would go directly against nature. A miracle, by definition, is something that contradicts the laws of nature. A healing, I would have said.

Now, this is not what I say now, but I'm just telling you what I would have said for years. A healing was different from a miracle in that a healing is something that might take place, even according to the laws of nature, given enough time. But it's just instantly done through a gifted person who's got a gifted healing.

Whereas a working of a miracle would be something that actually goes against nature. It would be something like restoring a paralyzed limb or causing the sun to stand still in the sky or causing waters to part. Those would be miracles that violate laws of nature.

And I would have seen that as the distinction between these two gifts. Gifts of healings and the working of miracles. I'll just say I'm entertaining another idea about this.

I cannot claim to know whether I'm correct in entertaining it or not, but it's just something that has come with my own study of what's going on here. You'll notice in verse 9, it's the only case where it says gifts, plural. You've got the gift of the cross, you've got different gifts, but this is gifts, plural, of healings, plural.

Now, what are gifts of healings? Now, it's fairly common for charismatic teachers to say, well, there's two different kinds of healings necessary to the body of Christ. There's physical healings and spiritual healings. Maybe like inner healing.

And so, some people have a gift of physically healing other people. Other people have a gift of ministering in something more psychotherapeutic, only spiritual, which they would call inner healing. And therefore, they would even take support for the fact that there is such a thing as inner healing, separate from physical healing, from the fact that this is plural.

Gifts of healings. Two different kinds of gifts. Two different kinds of healing.

Well, maybe, but let me just say this. In the Bible, we never find any example of this inner healing. We do find a great number of examples of physical healings, but we never discover anyone in the Bible operating in a gift of, or for that matter, receiving some miraculous inner healing of the sort that is usually meant by that expression.

Certainly, every Christian experiences an inner healing, if we mean by that, a cleansing and a regeneration and so forth. But what's sometimes called the healing of the memories and so forth, nothing like that is found in Scripture, which doesn't mean God can't do something like that, but there's certainly no other Scripture that would encourage us to understand this particular expression, gifts of healings, to refer to a gift of healing of the memories or inner healing, which the Bible nowhere makes reference to anywhere else, nor do we find Paul exercising it or anyone else that we know of in the Bible. I'd like to suggest another possible meaning of this.

It is probably heretical compared to charismatic orthodoxy, but I'm growing in my convictions about this, and that the gift of healing, or a gift of healing, of which there are many, there are gifts of healings, each healing is itself a gift. Not each kind of healing. We're not talking about the person who has a gift of healing is administering healing to others.

A person who gets healed has received a gift from God. And several people get healed. There are several gifts of healing that happen in the church.

Now this is a very different way of looking at it, and of course some people really revolt at the suggestion, because of course receiving a healing isn't an ability at all. But I'm not sure that a gift has to be an ability. A gift of healing, or any other gift, is just a manifestation of the grace of God.

A gift that God has given to someone as a manifestation of His grace. And a healing, so received, can be a gift of the grace of God, from God. As a matter of fact, if you look at 2 Corinthians chapter 1, 2 Corinthians 1, verses 10 and 11, speaking of his own experience of being delivered out of adversity, and of God doing so, it says in 2 Corinthians 1, 10, that God delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us, in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift, this is the word charisma, granted to us through many.

Now, I don't know if you missed his train of thought there, but what he's saying is, we trust in continuing deliverance out of the hands of our enemies who want to kill us. We are in life-threatening situations every day. God has delivered us so far, He does deliver us, and we hope that He shall deliver us, as long as you keep praying for us, so that this gift, meaning the gift of being delivered out of the hands of His enemies, might be the product of many people, not just us, but your prayers as well, will help us in the receiving of this gift.

So, he's saying that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many, that is through the prayers of many. The gift here, the charisma of which he speaks, is relief from a physical hardship. It's not sickness in this case, but a life-threatening circumstance.

His deliverance out of a situation where his life was itself threatened, as he said in verse 9, which we didn't read. He says, yes, we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. Then he goes on to say that God did deliver us from what? These life-threatening situations.

And he says, keep praying for us so that this gift of deliverance that we receive can be wrought through many, that is through you who are praying. Now, it at least suggests this, that Paul uses the word charisma in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, to refer to something received, not so much to an ability granted. Paul is not speaking of him receiving the gift of deliverance, ministry.

The gift of ministering deliverance to others. He's talking about his own personal deliverance is a gift he has received from God. In principle, that's not much different than saying, if God healed me, that that healing was also a charisma, a gift of God's grace to me.

Now, let me support this in a variety of ways, if I could. Alternately, if we say the gift of healing is a gift that resides in some people, to heal other people, then I would like to suggest to you that that's not really significantly different than the gift of working miracles. Now, working miracles is the next gift he mentions in verse 10, to another, the working of miracles.

This clearly is somebody actually performing miracles. But, when the Bible uses this word miracles, which is works of power, it's from the Greek word dunamis, works of power, these are works of power. Such miracles, whenever this word is used in the scripture, usually refers to things like healings and exorcisms.

In other words, the word miracles cannot be made to exclude healings. As a matter of fact, the few times it's used in the scripture, in the New Testament, almost always refers to healings and or exorcisms. Look, for example, over at Acts chapter 8. Well, if you turn there, keep your finger there, let's look earlier still.

Let's look up Mark chapter 9. We'll see it first in Jesus, then we'll look at it in Acts. Look at Mark chapter 9, we'll start there instead. Mark 9, verses 38 and 39, it says, Now John answered him, saying, Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.

And Jesus said, Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in my name can soon afterwards speak evil of me. Now, the word miracle here is used only rarely in the New Testament, but it's the same one that's used when Paul talks about the working of miracles as a gift. What miracle is in view here? In this case, it's casting out demons in Jesus' name.

That's a miracle, working a miracle. Jesus himself is the one who authorized that

understanding of the word there. If you look at Acts 8, we have the ministry of Philip in Samaria recorded there.

And in verses 6 and 7, summarizing his success there in ministry, after he preached Christ to them, it says in verse 6, Acts 8, 6, And the multitudes, with one accord, heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles, same word in the Greek, which he did. What kind of miracles? Well, it tells us in verse 7, For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed, and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. Physical healings and casting out demons.

These are referred to the miracles which he was working. It included healing. Look at Acts 19.

Here we have Paul in Ephesus. Acts 19, 11 and 12. It says, Now God worked unusual miracles, same word, by the hands of Paul.

By the way, there's three Greek words in the New Testament that's translated as miracles. But this word, which is only rarely used outside of, well, it's a less common word, is used in all these passages I'm showing you. Acts 19, 11.

Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Now, what kind of miracles are being done here? Healings and exorcisms. Healings and exorcisms in Samaria by Philip.

And of course in the place in Mark 9 we saw someone casting out demons in Jesus' name. Jesus said, Well, no one can work a miracle like this without, in my name, and later speak evil of me. The point is that if you study this word miracles through the Scripture, when it's worked through people, people working miracles in Jesus' name, it is apparently always with reference to healings and exorcisms.

Therefore, the gift of working of miracles in 1 Corinthians 12, if we would use the rest of Scripture to guide us as to the meaning of the word in the early church, it would presumably include ministering healing to people. So you wouldn't have a separate gift of healing, which was administering healing. So working of miracles would include that.

Therefore, I would suggest to you that the gifts of healings refer to the actual healings received as gifts by the sick person who is healed. That would explain the plural. There are gifts in the church of healings.

Each healing is a separate gift. And later on, when Paul says, Do all have the gifts of healings? Later on in the chapter, in verse 30, in the suggestion being no, it would suggest that not everyone gets healed. But there are those who do, and those who do have received a gift of God's grace, just as Paul, in being delivered out of the hand of his enemies, has received a charisma, a gift of God's grace to the same effect.

Of course, there's nothing that necessarily compels you to take this view, but it seems to me likely that the gift of miracles includes exorcisms and healings. And that's the working of miracles. The gifts of healings, the wording suggests the possibility that it's referring to individuals receiving healings, or individual healing, are the gifts of healings he's referring to.

Hope that's clear enough, because I don't have time to spend on it more. There's more controversial things to say. In the middle of verse 10, after the gift of working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another interpretation of tongues.

In this list, perhaps the one that I need to comment most about is the question of discerning of spirits. What is meant by the discerning of spirits? I mention people that I know who claim to have the gift of discernment. To my knowledge, there is no such gift.

The Bible does not ever speak of a gift of discernment. Discernment is... What's another word we could say? The capability of making a judgment. Discernment is something which, according to Hebrews chapter 5, is developed in the Christian by reason of use of the scriptures.

I'm thinking of the last verse of Hebrews 5, which says that solid food is for those who are of full age, who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern good and evil. The ability to discern between good and evil, to judge between good and evil, is a quality developed by use of the scripture. Those who do not have it, the writer says in the previous verse in Hebrews, says that they are unskillful in the word of righteousness.

Becoming skillful in the word makes you capable of making decisions about what's right and wrong, true and false, truth and error, good and evil. The word of God equips you for that, and Christians develop that discernment by interacting with the word of God and using it. Now, what then is a gift of discerning of spirits? That depends on what is meant by spirits.

The word discerning means judging. But what is meant by spirits? Almost my entire charismatic life, I've understood this to have something to do with recognizing demons. Knowing that there were demons in the room, which of course are invisible and we might well be oblivious to their presence, if not for somebody having a discernment.

I sense there's a spirit of something here, a spirit of bondage in the room, a spirit of pride, a spirit of lust, or whatever. And I discern that spirit. And I always understood discerning of spirits to be a special gift which enabled a person to identify what spirits were present which would not be obvious to all.

It would take some special revelation on that. I also figured that that extended to the ability to be able to discern that somebody was demonized. It's not always clear if a

person is demonized.

Now, a lot of times it is. If they're rolling on the ground, foaming at the mouth, barking like a dog, and 40 different voices are speaking at them, and they're throwing up, it's a little girl throwing up huge men who are trying to hold them down without effort, I'd say we've got pretty good evidence this is a demonized person. But there are cases like the girl who followed Paul and Silas around in Philippi just saying, these men present the way of salvation.

Who would have guessed that she was demonized? But Paul, after three days, knew she was and cast the demon out of her. But it was not anywhere near as obvious. In her cases, it would be in some.

And I often felt that the discerning of spirits had to do with being able to recognize the presence of demons in a person or in a room or whatever. And perhaps that is what it means. However, I was studying the gift of prophecy a few years ago because of some controversy that has arisen in the prophetic movement in Kansas City and some places like that.

I was trying to understand what the gift of prophecy really referred to in Scripture. I read a book put out by the Vineyard People on their position, which, by the way, I do not agree with. But I do believe in the gift of prophecy, but I do not believe, for example, that prophets can be wrong.

Part of the orthodoxy of the new prophetic movement is that prophets can be fallible and still be prophets of God. I was searching the Scriptures to see if those things were so and I have not found anything to support it. But one of the things that they point out is that the Bible says that prophets should be judged.

They say this. They say in 1 Corinthians 14, And they said the reason you have to judge prophecy is because it is not 100% accurate. You need to be judging whether it is accurate or not.

Well, I personally believe that the reason we judge prophecy is because not all people who prophesy are true prophets. And we have to judge whether they are or not. We read earlier today, 1 John 4, the opening verses, And I understand it to be necessary to test spirits.

Now, in 1 John 4, it says, I am under the impression from certain passages, in Paul especially, that spirits was a New Testament way of speaking of the utterances of prophets. Not just the spiritual being, like a demon or the Holy Spirit. The word spirit is used a great number of ways in the Bible, including the human spirit and a spirit of fear, which is just sort of like an attitude of fear and so forth.

But the word is very flexible. But I believe that the utterance of a prophet, whether a true

or a false prophet, was regarded as a spirit. And these spirits had to be tested or judged.

So John says, test the spirits. That is, test the prophetic utterances and see if they are of God, because there's many false prophets out there. And test the spirits meant nothing else but test the utterances of the prophets.

Paul said, for example, I'm running out of time, I'll have to take this up again tomorrow, but let me try to get this in before the tape ends. 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2. 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul says in verses 1 and 2, Notice three ways that they might get information. One was by a letter that purported to be from him.

One might be through somebody's word that is given in the church. Another might be through a spirit, presumably meaning a prophetic utterance in the church that convinces them that the coming of the Lord is in fact come, or the day of the Lord has come. I personally think that if you study that, you'll find there are places where the word spirit is used that it presumably means the word of a prophet.

You'll notice, if that is the case here, that what he's saying is some people have the gift of prophecy, others have the gift of judging prophecy. Some have the gift of tongues, others have the gift of interpreting tongues. You'd have this pairing of the two gifts in this list.

Prophecy and the judging of prophecy. Two different gifts. Tongues and the interpretation of tongues.

Two gifts. I'm afraid since we've run out of tape, I'm going to have to take this up again next time. I was hoping to get further along, of course.

But I told you I could use the rest of our time just to find these gifts. I guess that was prophetic.