

SEEKING THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY (1 CORINTHIANS 12)

We'll be looking at **1 Corinthians 12**, where the Apostle Paul addresses the spiritual gifts that are given to the children of God, by the Holy Spirit of God, that is, to those who have believed on Christ Jesus and have received Him. In speaking of the callings of God through Christ, to the church at Ephesus, Paul said, it is all "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying [lifting up] of the body of Christ, till we all come to the **unity of the faith** and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to a **perfect man**, to the measure of the stature of the **fullness of Christ**; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in **love**, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the **edifying of itself in love**." To backtrack a bit to add context, to Paul's message:

When a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, we read from **John 3**, that he said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (**John 3:3**) Jesus didn't address Nicodemus' assertion of Him being from God and that God was "with Him", but instead got to the heart of what Jesus knew that Nicodemus needed to know. Obviously, Nicodemus wasn't prepared for what Jesus had said, as...] "Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, **We** speak what **We** know and testify what **We** have seen, and you do not receive **Our** witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (**John 3:4-12**) When Jesus said, "**We** speak what **We** know and testify what **We** have seen", He is clearly speaking of Himself along with His disciples since shortly afterwards Jesus had said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner." (**John 5:19**) And then consequently, the disciples did and taught as He

did. And then later that message was spread to all nations as Jesus had commanded in His "Great Commission, after He had risen from the dead, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make **disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, **I am with you always**, even to the end of the age." Amen."
(Matthew 28:18-20)

Back to Jesus and Nicodemus, Jesus continued: "If I have told you **earthly things and you do not believe**", ie: "things which occur on earth. Not sensual or worldly things, for Jesus had said nothing of these; but he had told him of operations of the Spirit which had occurred "on earth," whose effects were visible, and which "might" be, therefore, believed. These were the plainest and most obvious of the doctrines of religion."¹ "**How will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?**" Greek: "epouranios" (ep-oo-ran'-ee-os) from epi: "(up)on" and ouranios: sky, celestial. That is where in Greek mythology Uranus [yur'-uh-nus] was the god of the sky. Yet as we know, from the Word of God, as Paul said in **Colossians 1:16**, "For by Him [Christ Jesus] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." And "our God [Elohim] is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases." (**Psalms 115:3**) It should also be mentioned that He is also perfect in all of His Ways (**2 Samuel 22:31**) and His Works (**Deuteronomy 32:4**).]

Jesus continued saying, "**No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."** (**John 3:13-21**) Jesus addressed the need to believe on Him and then also to "metanoeo" (repent), have a change of mind to recognize a need for change and heeding to that need by turning to Jesus ("**the Light of**

1 <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/john/3-12.htm> (Barnes' Notes on the Bible)

the World"-John 8:12) to have that change done by God through Christ Jesus! To be "born again".

Later, the Apostle John recorded Jesus expounding on that process. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. [Great Commandment and the second-LOVE] And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever- the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (John 14:15-18) "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me." (John 14:22-24) All of what Jesus is saying is that we are responding to the love of God, turning to Him for the forgiveness of our sins against Him, and by loving back-Him and others. The "love of God" is at the core of the gospel of Jesus Christ! That leads us to our passage of Scripture for today.

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1 Corinthians 12 (Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity)

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

[Greek "agnoeo"- which means "without knowledge"-which is where we get the word "agnostic". The Apostle Paul told Timothy, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." That's what we need, to know Him and also for Him to know us and not to be "agnoeo", without knowledge or hope in Christ!]

You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.

["Dumb idols". That's a good translation as it is the Greek "a-phonos", which literally means without sound. It can also have the

meaning of being "without signification", "meaningless", pointless"-just plain dumb²! We are told, concerning not necessarily "idols" of stone or wood that has carved hands, feet, and a face", as that may just seem silly to us in our culture, as it should, but that "...Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." According to Webster's Dictionary, idolatry is "the worship of idols or excessive devotion to, or reverence for some person or thing. An idol is anything that replaces the one, true God."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.

[That makes sense in that a child of God will not curse Christ Jesus. It is certainly implied that what Paul is saying is that no one who has not believed on and received Christ would call Jesus Lord. Yet Jesus had said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23) The evidence of being a child of God rests in the fruit they bear, as Jesus had said just prior to that quote, and it is not what they are saying or doing works-wise. The fruit of the Spirit of Christ is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23)]

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one **for the profit of all**: 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 and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as **He wills**.

Unity and Diversity in One Body

² <https://biblehub.com/greek/880.htm>

³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/idolatry-definition.html>

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism [Greek “schizma”: division] in the body, but that the members should have the same **care for one another**. And **if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it**; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 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? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

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For next week will look at that “more excellent way” in **1 Corinthians 13**. The Apostle John spoke of that most excellent way in saying, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (**1 John 4:7-11**)