

## 6.1 Demons Bring Division: Grace Produces Growth

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- [ 0 : 00 ] Well, let's turn now to our reading for this morning, and we are in 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and Josh is continuing his series through this letter.
- And we're looking at 1 Corinthians 12, and reading the whole chapter. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and verse 1.
- Now, concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led.
- Therefore, I want you to understand that no one, speaking in the Spirit of God, ever says, Jesus is accursed. And no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit.
- Now, there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.
- [ 1 : 17 ] To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge, according to the same Spirit.
- To another, faith by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit. To another, the working of miracles. To another, prophecy. To another, the ability to distinguish between spirits.
- To another, various kinds of tongues. To another, the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by the one and the same Spirit.
- Who apportions to each one individually, as he wills. For just as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.
- For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
- [ 2 : 24 ] For the body does not consist of one member, but many. If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.
- And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing?
- If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But, as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be?
- As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 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. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

And on those parts of the body that we think less honourable, we bestow the greater honour. And our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require.

[ 3 : 33 ] But God has so composed the body, giving greater honour to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honoured, all rejoice together. Now, you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.

And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administration, and various kinds of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues?

Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

[ 4 : 38 ] Amen. May God bless his word to us. Well, do turn again your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

Is yours a church that does the Holy Spirit? That's a question that's likely to lead in some way to a discussion or a reference at least to chapters 12 to 14 of 1 Corinthians.

And very often, these chapters are either ignored if you're a church that doesn't do the Holy Spirit, or they're treated like a kind of a textbook or checklist to see how we're going to do the Holy Spirit if you do the Holy Spirit.

And both of these approaches will have a detrimental impact on a church. very often, the intrigue in these chapters is taken up with the nature of the so-called spiritual gifts rather than with the purpose of the manifold ways that God gifts his people.

To make these solely the Holy Spirit chapters is, I think, somewhat misguided. He is, after all, explicitly named as such only once throughout the three chapters in 12 verse 3.

[ 6 : 09 ] Now, of course, the word Spirit is used more often, but there are times where that cannot be the Holy Spirit. For example, chapter 14, verse 14.

There are times where it absolutely has to be the Holy Spirit. for example, chapter 12, verse 4. And there are times where it's ambiguous and hard to be sure.

For example, chapter 14, verse 2. Some translations in chapter 14, too, speak of someone uttering mysteries in his spirit with a small s.

And that's a perfectly fair translation. And chapter 13, which is the central chapter, the issue around which this section hinges, doesn't mention the Spirit once.

The nub of the issue Paul is tackling is that Corinth, with all of its might, values some people more highly than others because of the spiritual-looking things that they can do.

[ 7 : 17 ] their glorious Corinthian spirituality must show itself in spiritual activities. Those who show the most spectacular abilities are the mighty ones.

Those who show no impressive spiritual signs, well, they're the weak ones. And so, to garner a practice from these chapters that divides and lifts some Christians above others in the church because of what they've been gifted by God to do, that is to commit the same mistake that the Corinthians did.

Whereas, when these chapters lead to a united church who love and serve one another and are given wholly to one another's growth in the Lord Jesus, then these chapters are bearing fruit in the life of a church.

Well, let's get into the passage. Firstly, Paul wants us to grasp that there are different spirits, verses 1 to 3. there are different spirits.

It's important to understand that not everything that is spiritual is good. God's spirit works to bring people to trust in Jesus, but there are other spirits at work.

[ 8 : 32 ] There is evil at work, and that evil wants people to be divided and distracted from Jesus. Now, we're familiar by now, at this point in 1 Corinthians with the pattern that happens in the second half of the letter.

When Paul uses the phrase that he uses in verse 1, now concerning, he does so to introduce issues that the Corinthians have raised with him. And so we've seen the phrase come up in chapter 7 and in chapter 8.

And each time, Paul quotes Corinthian sayings that reveal their understanding. So in chapter 7, they say it's not good for a man to have sexual relations with a woman.

And then Paul goes on at length to correct their understanding. And in chapter 8, their sayings are again present. Paul mentions them and he goes on at length to correct their understanding.

And so the pattern is Paul quotes a Corinthian understanding of things and then corrects it. Now look at chapter 12, verse 1. Most translations have that.

[ 9 : 42 ] Now concerning the spiritual gifts. But I think that's a rather unhelpful translation. And it's one that set all kinds of hairs running. If you look at the footnote, you'll see that it can be spiritual persons, spiritual things.

It's literally now concerning the spirituals. By speaking here about spiritual gifts as some kind of category of things, that actually creates an interpretive bind.

So that where there are difficulties throughout these chapters discerning what exactly Paul is talking about, and we'll get to some of that later, the easy answer becomes, let's fall back on these are the spiritual gifts.

But Paul doesn't use that phrase. It's not present here at all. The footnote is a far more helpful and faithful translation. The Greek simply says the spirituals.

And what I think is happening here is that Paul is using the Corinthian word, like he has done throughout, the Corinthian understanding of things, and their word, their idea, is to talk about the spirituals, the spiritual people, the spiritual things.

[ 10 : 56 ] And then he corrects them. And Paul's corrective is to talk about gifts. Grace. It's the same word for both of those things, gifts and grace.

And I think translators seem to conflate into one phrase, the Corinthian word, spiritual, and Paul's word, grace or gift. And they put them together.

But the reality is that there's no such category in the Bible for spiritual gifts. The Bible never talks like that. The phrase is used once in the whole New Testament, and it's when Paul says to the Roman church, he wants to give them a spiritual gift, which is to see them and encourage them.

So the Corinthians want to talk about spirituality, spiritual things, spiritual people, because that plays into their propensity towards acclaim and might.

It makes them stand out. We're the spiritually privileged ones. We're the ones who have it all spiritually. It feeds the ugly Corinthian spirituality. But Paul's word, gift or grace, dismantles any possibility of that.

[ 12 : 08 ] It dismantles any possibility of boasting. Because who can boast about something that's been given to them? That's exactly what Paul says in chapter 4, verse 7.

He says, who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Talking about what makes you spiritual, more spiritual than others, is twisted Corinthian spirituality. And Paul wants to change our thinking.

And that's what he says in verses 1, verse 3. I don't want you to be uninformed, I want you to understand. And so he's clarifying for them. And look at what Paul goes on to say immediately after raising the Corinthian question and idea.

Look at verse 2. The Corinthians have a history. They were prone to finding idols, and mute ones at that. Now we know from chapter 10 that idols may be speechless, and that they aren't anything, a carved piece of wood, a shaped piece of bronze.

[ 13 : 26 ] They're simply inanimate objects. But Paul has already told us that behind idols are demons. To engage the soul with these things is to engage the soul in a world of evil.

Paul says it's to participate with demons. So the Corinthians have a history of running however they were led, verse 2, to evil spirits and participating in things that opposed the Lord Jesus.

There is a spiritual world, and to quote James Philip on this, all is not gold that glitters. And so look at verse 3.

In the midst of a world where worship can be shaped by and engaged towards all kinds of wrong and evil, there is a discernible way of seeing God's spirit, that is the Holy Spirit, at work.

His work is to draw people to Jesus. That's what he does. He opens blind eyes and dead hearts to see and love and confess that Jesus is Lord.

[ 14 : 39 ] Lord. James Philip suggests that perhaps in the Corinthians desire to be spiritual, to do the things that seem particularly spiritual, their love for speaking in tongues, whatever that means, it seems to be the most prestigious spiritual act in Corinth.

James Philip wonders whether what the Corinthians are actually unknowingly saying is, verse 3, Jesus is accursed. it may just be that the people who were prone, however they were led, to find mute idols were now finding themselves in their desire to be spiritual, to actually be speaking evil against the living God.

And the reality is that what makes someone truly spiritual is a lot more straightforward than some spectacular act. what makes someone truly spiritual is being able to confess that Jesus is Lord.

That's a lot more straightforward than speaking in the tongues of angels, but it is far more miraculous. To confess Jesus is Lord and to keep on doing that takes a miraculous work that can only be done, verse 3, by the Holy Spirit.

what else can turn a heart of stone to a heart of flesh? What else can open blind eyes to see? What else can bring life from death?

[ 16 : 15 ] No doctor or magician or spiritualist can take a cold, dead body and breathe life into it. It takes a literal miracle.

miracle. Well, the Spirit of God performs that miracle all the time. He's performed that miracle with everyone here who trusts in Jesus.

Now, in this world, the way it's going, it will take a miracle, a supernatural work of God's Spirit to keep on saying that Jesus is Lord when that will mean that whole careers are closed off for you, when that will mean that your children or your grandchildren forego education and the institutions that we were able to be educated in.

It will take a miracle to keep on saying that Jesus is Lord when our financial security and our relationships are under threat for saying it, when people try to get us sacked because of Jesus.

But, friends, that is a miracle that God's Spirit works again and again. true spirituality is seen not in spectacular sounding things, it's seen in saying that Jesus is Lord and in submitting to Jesus is Lord.

[ 17 : 40 ] Well, Paul goes on to say secondly, the Lord's people are all given a divine supply. The Lord's people are all given a divine supply, verses 4 to 11.

the triune God uniquely gifts each member to a church for its upbuilding. God's gifts to his church are his people.

He gifts to his church his people. He hasn't given this church simply some who have the gifts to preach. He's gifted to the church Willie and Paul and Phil and Edward and Stephen.

Yes, with all their abilities in preaching but not limited to that as if that's the allotted part of themselves that is given for the benefit of others. He hasn't simply given some who have the gift of music.

He's given Michael and Sarah and the others who are playing here today and at the other places. Yes, so they would use their gifts but also all of themselves for the benefit of others.

[ 18 : 53 ] He hasn't simply given some who have the gift of welcome. He's given Arthur and Rachel and Sheila and Charles and all the others who are involved in it.

Yes, to welcome and embrace new people but to use all that they have to build up the church. That's what Paul's saying in these verses. God gifts all kinds of people who have all kinds of things to offer for the growth and flourishing of a church family.

Notice what Paul says about who gifts. Verse 4, he says there are varieties of gifts but the same spirit. Verse 5, varieties of service but the same Lord and varieties of activities but the same God.

God. Spirit, Lord, God. It is the triune God who is at work in building the church.

The Holy Spirit doesn't go rogue to grant gifts. Look at verse 6. It is the same spirit, Lord, and God who empowers all of our gifts but not just gifts, all of our service and all the activities we're able to do and he does this in everyone.

[ 20 : 21 ] That language of all and every is so vital in Paul's argument. That's how he starts the letter back in chapter 1. All Christians have been given everything in Christ. There is no such thing as the truly gifted and the rest.

Very often we use the word gifted in a Corinthian way. When we say someone is incredibly gifted, it usually means we want to draw attention to them and we're highlighting what's remarkable about them, what stands out about them as an individual.

Paul says there are varieties of gifts and there are all kinds of ways of serving and all kinds of things to give our time and energy to. These chapters aren't about whether we do the Holy Spirit.

they're about whether we take all that God himself has gifted to us and whether we use it for the good of the church. Everything that God has made us and given to us is verse 7 for the common good.

Look at verse 7. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit. God's Spirit draws each to say that Jesus is Lord and so as they say that they give all of themselves with all that God has made them for the common good.

[ 21 : 48 ] Now I look at verses 8 to 10. These are very often treated as the kind of list of what the 8 or 9 so-called spiritual gifts are but remember that isn't what Paul says.

There is no category of spiritual gifts. gifts. And there are some challenges for us with knowing exactly what Paul means by each of the things he lists here in verses 8 to 10.

One of the best technical commentaries that you can get on this letter has 53 pages given to just these three verses and the various possibilities of what they can mean.

53 pages. Conclusion, we can't be certain. We can't know exactly what Paul's talking about. And just because there are perhaps understandings and practices today of what is meant by something like tongues or prophecy, that doesn't mean that that's what Paul was talking about here.

The truth is we don't know for certain. But with the things that Paul does list, there's a distinct Corinthian flavor, isn't there? He starts verse 8 with wisdom and knowledge.

[ 23 : 06 ] They're pretty big Corinthian words, aren't they? We've seen them all throughout, particularly in chapters 1 to 4. And then look at his last examples. Verse 10, they're around prophecy and tongues.

Did the Corinthian church like speech? They loved it. They loved impressive speech. Now, we will return to prophecy and tongues in chapter 14.

That's where they're much more prominent. And we'll see there that tongues in particular seem to be the thing that the mighty in Corinth either did or wanted to do. But for now, this isn't a list of spiritual gifts, because no such category exists.

And it also isn't an exhaustive list of the ways that God does enable and gift his people. So if you're looking at this and thinking, I don't really fit any of this, that is not because you lack.

It's because spiritual gifts aren't a category, and it's because this isn't an exhaustive list of how God fits his people for his service. I think Paul uses these things because they were pertinent for better or worse in the Corinthian church.

[ 24 : 22 ] These are the spirituals that they had in mind. But notice, Paul's concern at no point is on the nature of the spiritual things.

He just doesn't talk about that. What he talks about is that God gives to his church and he gives things for his church. So verse 11, all these, all gifts, all kinds of service and all kinds of activities are empowered by one and the same spirit who apportions to each one as he wills.

So our gifts and abilities are not ours to show off and they aren't for ourselves. And why does he do such things? Well, as we've already seen verse 7, he apportions these things for the common good.

So if the Lord has gifted you with wonderful musical ability, why would you use it only for yourself? Why would you use it only to build your own acclaim for your own enjoyment?

Or if you've been given a wonderful ability to host and cook and socialize, well, it's a perversion to only unveil that when it furthers your career or your social standing.

[ 25 : 44 ] Now, some of us maybe have something about us that would be hard to give a name to, an eagerness to look out for the lunar in church, to pull together the apparent misfits.

Some of us may have an aptitude for knowing when to put an arm around someone who may be in need of encouragement, even if we're not very good with words. Maybe you excel in being thoughtful or you have the reserves to be a dogged friend or aunt or grandparent who keeps supporting and sacrificing so that those who need support can flourish.

Whatever it is that we have, some virtues and skills that are distinct to us, other things that we may share, they've been given to us in God's provision for God's people.

people. The reason we can do the things that we can do is to bless the Lord's people. And that's what Paul goes on to illustrate.

Thirdly, verses 12 to 26, God's design is that in a church all are significant. God's design is that in a church all are significant.

[ 27 : 05 ] Verses 12 to 26, in God's design, a church is beautiful because every member gladly gives what they are for the whole body and nobody, not one person is redundant or disposable.

Paul begins to land what he's saying with the metaphor of the church as a body. Verse 12, just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many, are one body.

Notice what he says, all the members are one body, no exceptions. And look at the astonishing thing that Paul says here at the end of verse 12.

With a metaphor of the body, we might expect Paul to say, and so it is with you or so it is with the church, but look at Paul's phrase, and so it is with Christ, the one to whom we all belong, the one to whom we were verse 13 baptized into.

There is a theological reality for us as a church, and it is that we are united to one another. That's a fact. We don't need to try and make it true.

[ 28 : 30 ] It is true. As we are in Christ, we are joined inseparably to one another. We aren't to try and be a body, we are one. The question is how well will the body function?

Is it a body where the back is put out, the knees need to be replaced, the sights diminished? Is it ravaged by disease, slowly killing itself? Or is it in rude health, limber, ready to run the race?

Paul uses the metaphor of the body to both encourage the weak in Corinth and to rebuke the mighty. So first, the weak. Those who say things like, I'm not needed, I don't really have anything to give.

Well, he encourages them in verses 15 to 20. Look at verse 15. if the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that doesn't make it any less a part of the body.

No surprise here that Paul uses a foot for this illustration. Nobody wants to be a foot. Filthy, sweaty, stinky toenails, verrucas. I'm only a foot, the smelly, oddly shaped thing that my church family have to put up with.

[ 29 : 54 ] And I need regular attention, otherwise I get pungent and problematic. Except, where would a body be without feet?

The reason they get sore and blistered is because they enable us to be mobile. Whether feet weird you out or not, try getting through a day productively, doing anything meaningful without using your feet.

Or verse 16, the ear says, well I'm not an eye, I look even weirder than a foot, I don't even point forwards, I'm full of wax, I'm just really not up to much, not like the eye.

People fall in love because of eyes, ears not so much. Paul is clear for both of these, just because you don't appear quite as useful as someone else, that does not make you any less a part of the body.

What if we all were the same? What if we were a church full of Joshes? What a monstrosity! A body with only eyes sewn all over it, be like something out of Frankenstein's laboratory.

[ 31 : 06 ] poetry. Paul is encouraging those who feel like they aren't really valuable because they don't have the right gifts. And it's so easy for us to long for things we don't have, thinking I'd be a lot more useful at church if only I could play the piano, or if only I could lead a Bible study, or if only I loved meeting new people and was good with them, but I'm not.

Well, look at what Paul says in verse 18. As it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

Brothers and sisters, if you belong to this church, you're here not to be someone else or to do things you cannot do. You're here and every bit as much a part of the body as anyone else because God wants it that way.

the church is the showroom of God's glory to the cosmos and in this local manifestation of that, he wants you on display. Your being here is not inconsequential.

Your friendships with others are not nothing. Your commitment to pray every fortnight for the person or the ministry that always slips under the radar, that is not nothing.

[ 32 : 32 ] You're showing up each week and deciding I'm going to sing heartily when we have our hymns, that is not nothing. Your small acts of grace and kindness to others are not nothing.

The smile on a Sunday, the note you sent to someone who's struggling, that's not nothing. Your willingness to pick up the phone, to check in with a brother or sister, that is not nothing.

Your bearing with people, your want to keep on serving them even when they disappoint and hurt you, that's not nothing. You're showing up on a Sunday because worship and your church family are a priority, even though everything else in your life is falling apart, you keep coming.

That is not nothing. How many of these things have a grand title in church life? And yet, if one by one they were removed, moved, then this body that we are would be emaciated.

Tomorrow, we give thanks for the life of a dear sister, another unique part of our body. Jew, blessed so many by her faithfulness and prayer, thoughtfully and consistently bringing before the Lord things that others wouldn't think to pray for.

[ 33 : 54 ] A sister who was determined that come what may, she would serve the older ladies in the church, many of whom were isolated or widowed or less able, and she did so so that they would be encouraged and able to encourage others.

No grand title or position, just a faithful sister giving what she had for others. Well, that's Paul's encouragement to those who are the weak, who feel like they can't offer much.

And he goes on to say in verses 21 to 26, that the mighty, those who say things like, I don't need you, he rebukes them, he corrects them.

And behind this kind of attitude that says I have the more important gifts, I'm particularly useful, so things ought to be set up for me to flourish, well, that's not quite right, is it?

Verse 21, the eye cannot say to the hand or the feet, I don't need you. And any church will always have some ways of serving that are particularly esteemed, more regarded, perhaps those who labor in preaching and teaching, those who are visible at the front, those who lead teams and ministries, those whose gifts and service is obviously visible.

[ 35 : 25 ] And it can be easy to belittle the ways that others serve, to belittle what others' experiences and capabilities are. And it can be easy to expect that everyone should think about things and do things the way that I would.

Or to think that you're excused from the regular things that all Christians are to be taken up with, because you've got the special gift. But whoever we are, we're still to love our church family, showing hospitality however we can, round the lunch table or with our cup of tea.

And whatever our role, whatever we're able to do, we're still servants of one another. This is a particular challenge to those who lead a team or a ministry. That isn't a role for you.

It isn't a role to showcase what you can do for the adulation of your team or at the expense of your team. In fact, because God has turned wisdom upside down, those parts of the body, verse 22, that seem weaker are indispensable.



In the face of all the Corinthians might, it's those parts that we think less honorable that receive the greater honor. In verses 23 and 24, Paul is speaking of our private parts, parts of our bodies that are never seen in public, and they aren't dishonored by never being seen.

[ 37 : 01 ] We cover them up, we treat them with greater honor. And God has so composed the body that there is greater honor for the parts that lack it.

With God, there is no such thing as a loss of honor. In a church family, there's no such thing as a loss of honor. God sees to that. God sees to it that the body won't be divided.

It's not going to be divided between honorable parts and dishonorable parts. There's no such thing. Not in God's design and not in God's eyes. All the parts of a body are designed for the flourishing of the whole thing.

So those who belong to this church family, we are all essential parts of one body. So much so that verse 26, if one member suffers, all suffer.

If one member is honored, all rejoice. that is so profoundly important. When we hear of someone struggling and we think, I don't really care.

[ 38 : 15 ] I don't really know them. That's not my concern. That is like saying that the blood gushing out of a stab in my leg, that's not really a concern to me.

That's folly. When it comes to my spiritual health, not one of our church family is dispensable. When an arm is detached from a body, it will die.

But the body is also diminished and maimed. Equally, when we hear of some great encouragement or blessing that someone else has received and our hearts say, well, that's nice for them.

Lucky them. That's like a player on a team refusing to collect the trophy which the team has won. because he didn't get to score the winner. Any battle that you win and any battle that I win is a battle that we win together.

When your 3-1-1 friend comes to faith, we all rejoice together. When you fly the flag for Jesus at school, we all fly it with you.

[ 39 : 28 ] when you get flack for doing that, we share in that flack. When you are persecuted out of your job because this is your church family, we are persecuted with you.

True spirituality and indeed God's design for the church beckons us to think, not I, but us. Well, finally, Paul concludes by saying in Christ we are much more than what we can do.

We are much more than what we can do. In verses 27-31. The measure of our spiritual life, our identity, is not found in the things we do.

Paul does spell out an ordering of sorts for some specific roles in the church. Again, this isn't an exhaustive checklist type thing. And again, Paul isn't interested in the nature of these roles.

Notice the ordering in verse 28. First, apostles. Second, prophets. Third, teachers. Then the other things.

[ 40 : 50 ] And again, look where he ends with the Corinthians favorite. Tongues. Its last bottom. Because any ordering of gifts, any preference to one over the other, is to be shaped by the common good.

Not status. By the common good. By what builds up the church. Tongues, as we'll see later in chapter 14, cannot be understood by all.

people. So that's less profitable for the common good of the church, isn't it? Whereas those things that relate to the clear teaching and preaching of God's word, apostles and prophets and teachers, those things are most for the common good, aren't they?

That's what feeds us. That's what nourishes us as a church, that we can all serve and give ourselves to the Lord Jesus. But notice verse 29.

Paul asks rhetorical questions, are all apostles, are all prophets and teachers and so on? What's the answer to that? No. But, verse 27, that doesn't mean in any way that you're not a full part of Christ's body.

[ 42 : 04 ] And look at where he ends in verse 31. I think there's been a lot of confusion over verse 31. And you can see that it says in our Bibles in the ESV, but earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I think it's translated like this because verse 1 has been translated as spiritual gifts. Remember, that's not a category. And if we were to honestly desire such things, that would seem to kick against what Paul's been saying throughout this whole passage.

Earnestly desire the things that are most important. That phrase, to earnestly desire, suggests that what is being spoken of is something that is lacked.

And that fits with the kind of understanding if you go with spiritual gifts, which isn't a category. But I think it's more helpful to read this as Paul's saying to be zealous for the higher gifts, the greater gifts.

The Greek word is literally be zealous for. And I think that fits better because Paul has made clear that everyone doesn't have all of these roles and abilities and what he finishes by saying is be zealous for what you do have.

[ 43 : 28 ] Turn back to chapter 1, verse 7. Paul says you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the Lord Jesus.

Our riches in Christ, our higher gift, those aren't the things that we can do and that we get to do that God helps us to do.

It's not about what we can do. It's about what he has done for us. The higher gift, the thing that we're to be zealous for, the thing that we're to praise and set our hearts on, is that God's spirit has opened our eyes to see and enlivened our hearts to delight in the truth that Jesus is Lord.

And he's our Lord. And we're his body. And as we belong to him, he has granted to us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. There is no spiritual shortcuts.

There's no spiritual life hack that if you get it, it's going to elevate you. The express tree into spiritual maturity isn't by trying to gain gifts that you don't have. It's not to sign up for Corn Hill to be really godly and learn to teach the Bible or to go overseas as a missionary.

[ 44 : 52 ] No. Delight in all that you already have. For in Christ we've been given every gift enriched in all speech and all knowledge as we wait for his glorious return.

In a chapter that is supposedly all about the spiritual gifts, Paul says, in Christ we are much more than what we can do. He says, set your hearts on the great gift that you've already been given in Christ, the truly miraculous thing that you know and love and submit to the truth that Jesus is Lord.

And with him as king we inherit a wonderful kingdom with every spiritual blessing. Let's pray. Father, we ask that you would forgive us for where we make church about I, and not us.

We ask for your help. Rebuke us where we do cling to the things that make us special and encourage us where we feel worthless, useless.

And we ask that you would grant us your grace and enabling to be a happy, healthy, and harmonious body as you've drawn us together together to be.

[ 46 : 28 ] And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. choosemen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.