

I wondered why I kept hearing all this stomping going on upstairs on the second floor of my house. I started to complain about it and my wife said stop it. They're getting ready for church. Oh. Ok. Good morning Crossroads. Good to have you here this morning. Ready to go deep? 1 Corinthians, chapter 12. That's where we are this morning. Turn there in your bibles. If you don't have a bible there's one provided for you in the chair back in front of you. We're in a series on the spiritual gifts and we're going through 1 Corinthians chapter 12, chapter 13 and chapter 14 so we're going to be on this topic for some time. Last week we spent most of our time just building context. Remember I've told you how important it is to understand the context any time you're studying the Word of God. In other words, it's like taking yourself and going back into that particular time, that mind-set, everything that's been going on. When you can understand that you can understand the context. And what did we say was going on in the context of the spiritual gifts within the Corinthian church?

Well, as we've been studying through the book of 1 Corinthians, no surprise to you, seems like every chapter we come to there's a new issue that was developing in the Corinthian church that Paul had to correct. We get to chapter 12 it's no different. There were problems with the spiritual gifts. The Corinthian believers were misusing the spiritual gifts in their services. Remember what we said? They were taking their past pagan background. They were pulling that into their understanding of worship and basically their services were chaotic and so Paul writes and says I've got to retrain you on the spiritual gifts and how to properly use them. And so that's what he's doing in chapter 12. He's just basically going through setting straight what are the spiritual gifts; which ones should be included in the list and then as we get into chapter 13 and 14 he's going to explain in detail how they should be used and how they should be appropriated in our lives.

But what we're doing now is we're basically just moving through the list and we find that in chapter 12, verse 8 through 11 and then drop down to verse 28 we see some additional there. We see that there are about fourteen spiritual gifts, give or take a couple in the list. Some are overlapping. But there are three categories. There's the teaching category. The signs category and the leadership category. Now last week we started in. We got about halfway through the teaching category. We looked at wisdom, knowledge and prophecy. Remember that? Let me just give you a quick update. Let me remind you what we learned very quickly.

Wisdom. The gift of wisdom or the word of wisdom. That was called the teaching gift. It's the ability to practically apply the truths of scripture to life. We know people like this. They study the scriptures and they just kind of pull out all that practical element and then they teach it to us. It makes a world of sense. Why is that? Because they have a gift from the Holy Spirit; not a natural ability. A supernatural ability – that's what a spiritual gift is to teach us. And they have the ability, the teaching gift and that's called the word of wisdom.

Another gift, very similar to that is called the word of knowledge and that is the ability to grasp the deep meanings of scripture. That's the scholar's gift; those people who really like to study; who dig down deep to understand the Word of God. Not this ethereal kind of word of knowledge idea where God gives you something and it comes from nowhere. No. It's the idea that you

actually enjoy the study process to come up with the knowledge that then you transfer and teach to others.

And then the last gift we looked at was the gift of prophecy and when you hear the word of prophecy what do you often think? You think of future telling, right? To be able to look in to the future and know the future but that's not the biblical sense of the word prophecy. It's forth-telling. It's the preaching gift; the ability to declare the scriptures. That's prophecy.

Now. Let's slow down for a moment. What did we learn? What did we say was important to understand about these three teaching gifts? Why would Paul focus so heavily right out of the shoot, when he's talking about spiritual gifts, why would he focus so heavily on the teaching gifts? Well, remember it goes back to context, right? The Corinthian church, they're gathering together; they're assembly to worship was chaotic. There was all kinds of people using spiritual gifts inappropriately. One of the gifts inappropriately was the gift of tongues and it was causing all kinds of confusion and so how do you bring a sense of stability into a worship service? You do it through teaching, right? It gives you a very linear approach. We're moving from point A to point B. That's the teaching concept and so what is Paul doing? He says I want to infuse this sense of stability into the worship service so that you bring it under control and that's exactly his mindset.

Remember when Paul is speaking through chapter 12, 13 and 14 on the spiritual gifts he's speaking with the mind to correct. He's not being directive in his teaching. He's being corrective in his teaching. You have to keep that in mind. Why? That's a part of the contextual understanding of 1 Corinthians especially in the study of spiritual gifts.

Now, we're ready to launch into the last three teaching gifts: discernment, the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues. Let's go to the text. Let's set it in our minds verses 8 through 11 and see the gift list that he presents in chapter 12. He says, to one is given through the Spirit, verse 8 the utterance of wisdom, to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another the gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another, watch this – we'll come back to it, the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. Verse 11. All these are empowered by one in the same spirit who apportions or appropriates depending on your translation, to each one individually as He wills.

Now, let's look back at verse 10. That phrase to another he gives the ability to distinguish between spirits is what we want to focus on. This is often called the gift of discernment. What is the gift of discernment? I find that many people have a misunderstanding when it comes to the term. They think it's some kind of divine intuition. This ability of divine foresight. That's not necessarily the understanding of discernment through scripture.

I was reading through some theological journals and some books on the subject of spiritual gifts and I was really amazed at how many of the authors misunderstand the biblical use of discernment. Then went to some of the popular websites that part of the spiritual gift inventory kind of genre. Spiritual gift inventory is like a test. You take this test. You fill out the

questionnaire and it tells you what spiritual gifts your supposed to have. And I kept going from website to website and again, I was amazed at how often discernment was misrepresented. For example, one website put it as a description for discernment, “do you have an uncanny ability to know a person’s mood; especially if they’re upset or they’re depressed; are you often called on to make decisions or give directions when the course is unknown. Do you have the ability to read between the lines people’s intentions? Are you skilled at knowing the events of people’s lives before they occur? Do you feel as if God gives you messages to give to others? If so, you have the gift of discernment.”

When I read that I thought that completely misrepresents the biblical understanding of discernment. It gives it this concept of divine intuition like you would know something before someone else; like God’s given you the ability to see into people’s lives unlike anybody else. Listen, that’s not the gift of discernment. In fact, the only time we see that kind of ability is either through the gift of the prophets, the gift of apostles both of which by the way have ceased their operation in the ministry of the church or we see it in demonic forces.

Let me just illustrate this. Hold your place in 1 Corinthians. Just come over to Acts, chapter 16 for a moment. You’re going to head towards the front of your bibles. You’re past Romans. You’re into Acts. Acts, chapter 16. There you are. Acts 16:16. Paul, Silas, Luke are heading through the area of Macedonia; this massive area district and they come into the city of Philippi so you want to know the background on the Philippian church you go to Acts 16. You read about it. So, they’re in Philippi. Paul just had the opportunity to convert Lydia who was there selling garments. She was the seller of purple garments it’s what Lydia is known as. She just got done converting her to Christianity. Now, they’re on their way; they’re making their way probably to the temple. It just says a place of prayer. And notice what happens about the middle of verse 16. We were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owner much gain by, look, fortune telling. So here was someone who had the ability of telling the future of other people; of looking into their lives and knowing what’s going on. A fortune teller. But she did it through a spirit of divination.

What’s the spirit of divination? It’s often translated as a python spirit or as one who was possessed by a demon spirit. Not a spirit from God but rather a spirit from Satan. How do we know that? Well, we keep reading you find out that Paul becomes so irritated with this woman that he cast out the spirit in the name of Jesus Christ. You don’t cast out a spirit of Christ with the name of Christ. You cast out a demon. That’s what he’s doing.

But now notice what this girl said in verse 17. She followed Paul and Silas and Luke and the group that was with them and she cried out these men are servants of the most high God who proclaimed to you the way of salvation. Now, tell me – did she speak the truth? Yes. She spoke the truth. Paul, Silas, Luke, Timothy, this group that was going throughout the area they were not proclaiming they were prophets of God even though they were. Yet how did this person, how did this slave girl know this fact about them? It’s because she had the ability through a demon spirit to tell the future. Where am I getting at? Those people who you might contact who have an ability to see into your life you cannot attribute that to anything in a divine or biblical mandate or standard. We do not see this gift operating in that fashion. In fact, we see just the opposite; that

people who are seers or oracles or soothsayers or clairvoyant those activities are condemned in scripture.

In Deuteronomy, you don't have to turn there, chapter 18:10-12, listen. It says there shall not be found among you anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens or is a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord. It's a condemnation to God when those who have a sense of ability to see into a life to predict a future.

Listen, you need to be careful with those who feel like they can look into your life and tell you something. By the way, that is never something that we see as mandated in scripture. Rather, what we see in scripture is that God is specific in the once for all delivered Word of God. He doesn't say you have to go to someone else to find out what he wants you to do. He says go to my Word. You don't go to someone who has these uncanny abilities. Why? Because they're not from Him. That's the point. They're rather from a satanic force.

You say, alright then, what is the gift of discernment? Well, let's go back to the text. Notice the clarification in verse 10. It says here's a person that has the ability to distinguish between spirits. We need to look into the grammar. What is the word distinguished mean? It means, listen, to evaluate or judge. Someone who has the ability to evaluate or judge what? Spirits. It's the Greek word numah. It can be translated in many ways. It can be translated as Holy Spirit. It can be translated demonic spirit or it can be translated a spirit of a person and I think that's how it's used here. Someone has the ability to judge; to analyze; to evaluate a spirit of a person; where that person's spirit comes from; what's leading that person. Why do I think that's the case with this word?

Well, think about it. What warnings are constantly coming from scripture? We ought to beware, weary of what? False teachers. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 7:15? He says beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Who wears sheep's clothing? Shepherds, right? People who lead the sheep. That's a metaphor for leaders. Leaders who are propping themselves up as those who are spiritualists. He says be careful.

Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5 says do not despise prophecy. We understand that as preaching. Do not despise preaching but test everything. Hold fast what is good. I've told you for years you ought to be testing everything that I say. Don't trust any teacher. Always go back to the Word of God. Two reasons. One – we're human. We're fallible. We make mistakes. You should always be testing what we're saying but secondly you ought to be testing so that no one leads you astray with false teaching. That's the idea. You ought to be testing it carefully. You ought to be testing not only what I say. You ought to be testing what anybody says that has to do with a teaching realm of the Word of God, whether you go to another church; you go to a conference; you watch something on TV. Don't just take it for face value because it sounds good; because it sounds right. Always go back to the Word of God. John says, 1 John 4, beloved, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. That's our role. We ought to be testing.

But listen the person with the sense of discernment; the ability to discern has this innate ability to see into that and be able to see if what a teacher is teaching is correct. In fact, that's the definition. Look at your notes. The ability to determine if a teaching or teaching is genuinely from God. That's the gift of discernment. That's how we see it used in the Word of God. Not this divine intuitive nature but the ability to tell if someone is teaching the Word of God. That's why this is often considered the protecting gift of the church. You protect the integrity of the Word of God.

Now, look in your notes. I've put in a number of different definitions for this particular gift. One comes out of the Bible Knowledge Commentary. I tell you the Bible Knowledge Commentary is produce by Dallas Theological Seminary and I like their definition. To differentiate the Word of God proclaimed by a true prophet from that of a satanic deceiver. Notice it always goes back to the baseline of the Word of God, doesn't it? That's where we always go. And so someone who has the gift of discernment and many of you I believe have this gift. You don't even know it. It's like you recognize whether or not a teaching is truly from the Word of God. You can look into a teacher and say. I don't know. I have some suspect about this particular person. Where does that come from? That comes from the Spirit of God. Why? To protect the church. That's the gift of discernment.

Now, let's look at the last two gifts under the teaching category. The gift of tongues and the gift of the interpretation of tongues. I can tell you've been waiting for this one haven't you? I think it would be fair to say tongues is the most controversial gift when you come to spiritual gifts. There are more questions around the gift of tongues than in any other gift. Questions like what is it? What is it for? Is it for today? How do I use it? Do I have it? Do I need it? Should I be praying for it? All these questions come out. Let me just tell you right off the bat. We're just going to scratch the surface today. I have a feeling I'm going to leave you with more questions than I'm going to answer. Do you know why? Because what is Paul doing in chapter 12? Paul is just giving us a gift list. He's not going into a lot of detail but he focuses on this gift in chapter 13 and chapter 14 and so we're going to spend a lot of time unpacking this gift and I have a feeling your questions will be answered eventually. You just have to stay the course. Today, we're just going to lay a foundation. So let's look at this gift.

Notice back in verse 10. How is it understood in scripture? Paul lists it as the ability to understand or the ability to speak various kinds of tongue. To another the interpretation of tongues. That's the sense that Paul gives. Now, what do we know about it? What do we know about tongues? Well, admittedly, what we know about tongues primarily comes out of a modern context? Don't we? That's what we know. If you really want to see the gift of tongues operating you go to our friends who are in the charismatic and Pentecostal backgrounds and you might see a form of what they feel is the gift of tongues operating in their church. It's a modern context. But what was one of the things that we said had to be a guideline? We have to come out of modern context into a biblical context. In other words, we need to be committed to understanding what the scriptures say. And so what we have to do is we have to take our modern concept and we have to put that aside for a moment and go back to a biblical concept and the way that you do that is get in their context, right?

Now, I know I've been driving this into your minds. I've been driving this into your thinking, why? Because not it's really going to start to show up. What have already learned about the Corinthian context? That here Corinthian believers were coming out of a pagan background. We know what background that happens to be because in the center of Corinth was what temple? The Temple of Aphrodite, right? And in the Temple of Aphrodite there was this huge event on a regular basis like a worship event. You might even say it was similar to a worship event within Christianity only it was like a worship event on steroids. These people would be in this confined area for hours upon hours. They would whip themselves up into such a frenzy that it was just absolutely out of control. And what the people themselves were trying to reach is this sense that they were communicating with the gods and they knew they were communicating with the gods when they would just lose control of their bodies and begin to speak in ecstatic utterances and speech; a language they didn't understand. But it felt like when they were doing that then they were speaking the language of the Gods and they were close to their gods and this was the sense of their worship.

Now, the Corinthians believers were coming out of this background and they were dragging this concept into Christianity. Which by the way, it wasn't just the Temple of Aphrodite. You could go anywhere around the Roman Greco world and you could have found cult-like worship that was similar to this that used ecstatic utterances. In fact, the more you study about tongues outside of Christianity you find that it's in just about every major cult-like religion. You read the writings of Plato for example, three-hundred and fifty years before Christ. He writes in his dialogue pages after page of the cult-like atmosphere and the use of tongues around the Greco Roman world. So we see it all over the place.

But we see it most clearly as it comes into view in Corinth and especially in the church of how the Corinthians believers are misusing it. And so, what do we see here? That the Corinthian church is not the best model to understand the authentic biblical gift of tongues. Why? Remember what I told you at the beginning. Paul is teaching them correctively, not di-rectively. So, he's correcting an issue; a problem; a misunderstanding; especially the gift of tongues.

John MacArthur in his commentary writes and I quote because of the extreme carnality of the church in Corinth we can be sure that much of the tongues speaking there was counterfeit. Believers were in not spiritual condition to properly use true spiritual gifts or properly manifest truth spiritual fruit. How could, he writes, a congregation so worldly, opinionated, selfish, cliquish, envious, jealous, divisive, argumentative, arrogant, disorderly, defrauding, inconsiderate, gluttonous, immoral and desacrative of the Lord's Supper exercise the gifts of the spirit? For them to have done so would have defied every biblical principle of spirituality. You cannot walk in the spirit while exercising the flesh. End quote. I think he's absolutely right.

Corinth is not the best place to understand the true gift of tongues. So where do we need to go? Where do you go? Where do you go to understand the operative gift of tongues? You go back and see how it was operating in church history. You go back to the early church history book of Acts. Acts, chapter 2. You want to see how the gift of tongues was used? Go back to Acts chapter 2. We were already in Acts once today let's go back. Acts 2. What is Acts 2? This is the

birth of the church. Acts 2 is where we see the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2 is where we see the gift of tongues in its operative mode. Acts 2 is where we understand its purpose.

So we're in Acts chapter 2, verse 1, beginning of the birth of the church. When the day of Pentecost arrive they all were together in one place. Now, who is he talking about? He's talking the disciples and the apostles. The disciples were in the Upper Room. The disciples, we read in Acts chapter 1 were about one-hundred and twenty so I think they moved from the Upper Room, likely to the outer courts of the temple. There they're meeting together and notice what happens. And suddenly, verse 2 there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind. It wasn't a rushing wind. It sounded like. And it filled the entire house where they were sitting and divided tongues as of fire. Not divided tongues of fire but as of fire. Appeared to them and rested on each one of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now here we see the gift of tongues being used. But how or why?

Keep reading. Verse 5. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devote men from every nation under heaven and at this sound the multitude came together and they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in his own language and they were amazed and astonished saying are not all those who are speaking Galileans and how is it that we hear each of us in our own native language, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God. Stop right there. Now, with what you now know just from acts what would you say is the gift of tongues? It's the gift, the ability to speak a known language without any prior training. That's what we see come out of Acts, chapter 2.

Tongues. The word in the Greek is glossa. We get the word glossolalia out of it. It literally means a language or a dialect. That's the word tongue. Now, it can also mean like your tongue. This tongue. It's like a member of your mouth. But it means primarily language or dialect. So tongues, if you want a definition is the ability to speak a known language without any prior training. Now, listen to me. Look up here. Listen. The only time this word is used in the New Testament to mean some type of utterance; this unknown language is in 1 Corinthians when Paul is writing in a corrective means or fashion; when he's correcting the Corinthians misuse of the gift of tongues. Every other time we see it used it is a known language. That means tongues is not a private prayer language. It's not a worship language. It's not a requirement, as many would say for salvation. It's not an indication of your baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is a ability to speak a known language without any prior training.

You say, well, what's the purpose of tongues then? Really. What's the purpose? If God wants to give me a language without any known training why would He do that and why does it seem to be such a confusion in the church? The church doesn't seem to understand its purpose. What is the purpose of this gift? Well, actually the scriptures are very clear of what the purpose of what the gift of tongues is used in the church; why it is used. You just have to read carefully. In fact, let me just give you a peek into what we're going to be studying in depth. Come back to 1

Corinthians, past chapter 12, into chapter 14 and Paul is going to tell us the purpose behind the gift of tongues.

Chapter 14. Now remember, he introduces it in chapter 12, through all of chapter 13 and half of chapter 14 he corrects the misuse. End of chapter 14 he gives us the authentic purpose for the gift of tongues. And in chapter 14, verse 20 we pick up Paul's now directive teaching on the gift of tongues. He says brothers, do not be children in your thinking, be infants in evil but in your thinking be mature. Do you hear what he's saying? He's saying I just spent the last chapter and a half correcting your misuse. Now, don't be offended by that. Let me tell you how the proper use of tongues ought to be used in the church of Jesus Christ. He says be mature about this.

He goes on, verse 21 – In the law it is written by people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people and even then they will not listen to me says the Lord. Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers. Stop right there. Back up. Look at verse 21. You notice most of the verse 21 is in quote marks? Why is that? It's because Paul is quoting from Isaiah 28:11 and 12. Paul is quoting from the book of Isaiah and he's using that as a reference point. Let me help you understand it. When Isaiah was speaking in the context of Isaiah he was speaking to a culture that was no longer listening to God. And so Isaiah predicts a future event and he says because you will not listen to the Word; because Israel you are rebellious and stick-necked people there is coming a day when there will be a foreign speaking force; an army; a people who will come in and invade and will take you away captive. Saying this, when you hear that foreign language among you know this that it is a sign that you are about to be overthrown. So, it was a sign of judgment. Sure enough, about a hundred years after Isaiah spoke these words the Assyrians came in and decimated Judah and took them off to slavery.

But listen to what Paul is saying. Paul is saying do you remember what happened to the Israelites? Remember the warning that Isaiah gave? Isaiah gave a warning. He said when you hear these foreign tongues it will be an indication that God's about to do something brand new in your midst. It's going to be a day of judgment. Paul said like that happened to the people of Israel. Now when tongues happen today it's a sign that God is going to do something brand new and what is it? It's the birth of the church. Tongues was used as a sign, an authenticating sign of the birth of the church. Basically Paul is pointing back to Acts chapter 2. He's saying when you hear the speaking of tongues is foreign language. When you hear people speaking a language they did not previously know that's a sign that God is doing something in your midst. No longer is salvation coming just through the nation of Israel. Now it is coming through Jesus Christ and it's open to all people – Jews and Gentile alike. Remember what Paul said in Galatians chapter 3. He said there is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There's neither male or female for all are in Jesus Christ. It's a new day. And so when you hear tongues being spoken it's a sign that it is a new day.

You say, well alright, what's the gift of interpretation? Well the gift of interpretation is translation. That's all it is. When you look at the Greek word for the gift of interpretation it means translation; the ability to translate a known language without any prior training. You say what's that? What's the purpose of that? Why do we need someone to translate if there are other people who know this known language? For the churches edification. If someone were able to

speak a known language but was not known to us we'd want to know what are they saying, right? And so an interpreter would say they're speaking this language and they're saying this. They're saying this is what is being proclaimed as the Word of God. It's the exact same thing that we see in Acts, why? So that it edifies the body. That's why tongues and the interpretation of tongues fits both in the teaching category and in the sign category.

So, look back at the scriptures. What is the gift of tongues? It's a sign, isn't it? It's a sign for what? For unbelievers just like we saw produced through the book of Acts. Now, the question you ought to be asking is alright, if it's a sign for unbelievers then is it a gift that is still active today? Is it a gift that the church ought to be a part of in their assemblies? Is it a gift that I should be wondering if I have in my own life? Now, look at your watches or your cell phones. What time is it? There's no way I can answer that question. So you know what I'm going to say, right? If you want to know if tongues still exist today you have to come back when we study chapter 13 because there's no way we can go through the complexity of that question today. You know what it means? It means you have to come back ready to study and get in. But what we're going to do in the weeks to come is we're going to finish this list. We're going to look at the sign gifts and then we're going to look at the leadership gifts.