

# One Spirit; Many Gifts

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 03 February 2008

Preacher: Paul Barker

[ 0 : 00 ] Tonight and next week, we have two sermons on this chapter, 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

And the reason for choosing this chapter and this topic of spiritual gifts is because when we last year filled in the National Church Life Survey, which is like a census of the churches in Australia, one of the areas in which we as a church at Holy Trinity in general were perhaps a bit weak on was at the area of people using and being encouraged to use their spiritual gifts.

And so as a result of that, I thought it would be helpful to us to remind us, maybe even for the first time, to look at this chapter over this week and next week with the aim not simply of understanding, but of helping us, challenging us, encouraging us in our service of God and using the gifts that God has given us for his service in this church or elsewhere and for the building up of God's people, for the bringing of people to faith in Christ.

Some level, the area of spiritual gifts can be a bit controversial and some of that controversy I'm going to bypass a little bit because our main aim in this series is not to, in a sense, grapple with some of the controversial sorts of issues, which I'll probably just touch on a couple, but rather that it equips us and urges us to be gift users for the glory of God.

So let's pray as we come to this passage tonight that God will work that in our lives. Heavenly Father, tonight we pray that as we come to these words in Paul's first letters to the Corinthians, that not only will you give us understanding, but that we'll be doers of your word, that we'll exercise the gifts that you've given us generously and for the building up of your people, for the common good, and ultimately for the glory of your name and the glory of the name of your son Jesus. Amen. Well, the Christian church in Corinth in the first half or midway through the first century AD regarded itself as intensely spiritual. And if we had had time to read all the way through this letter, 1 Corinthians, we would glean quite a deal of what they thought about themselves and their spirituality and so on. Throughout the letter, it's clear that they were rather boastful about their spiritual gifts, their spiritual maturity, indeed their spirituality in general. They took pride in their knowledge and in their wisdom, and they boasted in gifts like the speaking in tongues. Paul is addressing that issue in this chapter and indeed in the next two chapters as well. But we're just looking for now at chapter 12. A new topic begins at one level, although there is some transitional continuity. Paul in the immediately preceding chapter has been dealing with things to do with public worship or corporate worship, the gathering of the church, to do with covering your head and praying and the Lord's Supper. And so at that level, he continues on as he deals with the issue of the exercise of spiritual gifts, some of which, not all, but some of which would be used in the public gathering and worship, which God's people would practice week by week.

[ 3 : 32 ] But he begins by saying, now concerning spiritual gifts, that is, in a sense, this is a more or less a new topic. Brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. Literally, it's now concerning spirituals, we might say. Not necessarily gifts, because it could actually be a masculine plural. It could be spiritual people or spiritual gifts. And it may actually be, this is how they describe themselves as spirituals or as spiritual ones, we might say, to give it a bit of a noun as well. And so Paul maybe is deliberately being a little bit ambiguous about whether he means spiritual gifts, although the content that follows makes that clear, or also addressing the whole issue of your spiritual claim to be a spiritual person as well. And notice that he says, I don't want you to be uninformed.

Literally, I don't want you to be ignorant. And maybe there's a bit of a put down here, because the Corinthians were boastful about their spiritual gifts and their spirituality. And so at the very point of their pride, he says, I don't want you to be ignorant.

Oh, are we ignorant? That's part of the little sort of sting in the tail of the way that he introduces this topic in verse 1. They boast in their knowledge. And Paul is implying here that at least for some of them, if not generally speaking, they're actually ignorant, not knowledgeable.

I don't want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, let Jesus be cursed. And no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. The very stark contrast between false gods or idols who do not speak and the one true living God who speaks by his Spirit. And we'll see the emphasis on speaking in the list of gifts that follows. God is a speaking God, a revealing God, and that will mean that those under God's influence and the influence of God's Spirit will be speaking.

And here the primary test of the Spirit of God at work is not an experiential one, do you feel something, but a theological one. Do you declare the truth that Jesus is Lord? Now, of course, it is true that all sorts of people, I mean, anyone can just say Jesus is Lord. There could be people who are not believers who turn up in a church service and in the content of what's said in the church or a hymn that might be sung, like just simply say Jesus is Lord. But Paul's not saying that. He's not saying, well, such a person, they must be Christian.

[ 6 : 21 ] But rather he's saying from going from paganism to Christian faith, if you declare Jesus is Lord, that is with an implication of some sincerity, I guess, that is an extraordinary change from paganism. It is evidence of the Spirit at work. That's the fundamental test of the work and the activity of the Spirit of God, is the declaration that Jesus is Lord. In the ancient pagan world, there are all sorts of spiritual experiences that people might have. In a pagan, multi-God type context of the ancient Greco-Roman world, where God after God was revered, there were shrines and temples in Corinth to more than one God, one up on Acro-Corinth in the distance, several down in the city of ancient Corinth as well. To have another God didn't mean so much. To say that Jesus is Lord is a statement of monotheism, that Jesus is the Lord sovereign of all. It's a very strong claim.

And that will only be said by somebody who's under the influence of God's Spirit, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Theological truth is fundamental as the test of the work of God's Spirit. It's the ultimate test in one sense as well. And Paul's not referring here to a sort of empty statement that anybody could just simply say, but rather as a declaration of personal faith, a radical confession. So how do you determine what is truly spiritual? Does it declare that Jesus is Lord? Does it lead to the worship of Jesus as Lord or not? And sometimes that's a subtle test.

It's not always starkly black and white, but it's a test in effect in the Old Testament as well, because there are miracles that people do. There are spiritual experiences that people might have.

There are prophecies that are made. How do you know and test whether this is right or not? Well, the Old Testament test is in effect the same. Does it lead to the worship of the same God as Lord or not? And that's Paul's bottom line here before he moves on to talk about some of the spiritual gifts. Now, the basic point of the next paragraph, verses 4 to 11, which is the rest of the passage we're looking at tonight, is that there is one God giver, but a diversity and a range of the gifts given. And that those two themes run through these verses with the emphasis on the same spirit, the same Lord, the same God, one God, one spirit, same spirit. That language runs through almost every verse of this paragraph. And yet at the same time, you get the sense of the multitude, the variety, the diversity of the gifts that God gives. What it shows then is that the one giver does not lead to uniformity of what is given. There is unity, but there is diversity of what's given.

Not a uniformity that everybody has the same gift, the same pattern of ministry and service and so on. Not at all. Notice what Paul says then in the first couple of verses of this section.

[ 9 : 39 ] There are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit. Varieties of services, the same Lord. Varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

That's a clearly Trinitarian statement. Spirit, Lord, God, Father, Son, and Spirit working together. And often when we talk about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, somehow our whole thinking is that Jesus has done his work. He's gone. Now it's the Spirit's job and he gives the gifts.

But actually the biblical view is that the gifts actually come from God through the Son and then through the Spirit. It's actually the ascended Jesus who gives gifts to the church by his Spirit. And here we get that sense of the one God, Father, Son, and Spirit working together in unity within the Godhead of Father, Son, and Spirit. And yet that one God leads to variety in what is given. And notice that it's varieties of gifts, services, and activities.

They're all actually broad words. We ought not to think that somehow spiritual gifts are what matters and other activity is sort of mundane or pedestrian. But whether it's gifts or activities or services, it's all part of the same package of what is given by God, not fundamentally even to an individual, but really to the church. So what Paul is saying here is stressing in a sense the abundant variety of what he's given. And sometimes you'll read books on spiritual gifts and it'll tell you there are nine or 27 or some other number of spiritual gifts. Which one's yours? So you go through the checklist.

Oh, which is mine out of this 27 or nine. But Paul here is stressing that God is actually giving abundantly great variety. This is not a complete list. I think this list is tailored to the Corinthian boasting. We'll find other mentions of gifts in 1 Peter and Romans, for example, and Ephesians, but they're far from complete as well. The lists are not exactly the same where they occur in the New Testament. And even if you put them all together and get a longer list, I still don't think we'll necessarily end up with the full list. Sometimes people try to define spiritual gifts very, very tightly, that it's somehow something that's a bit supernatural or supranormal or something like that.

[12:17] But Paul here, I think, warns us against that sort of definition. Varieties of gifts, varieties of services, varieties of activities. That is, in a sense, anything by which we serve other people, any activity by which we serve God or serve others or build up the church, that's actually a spiritual gift or whatever. The spirituals, as the word is back in verse 1. We ought not to despise them or rank them, in a sense, and think that spiritual gifts are preeminent and, you know, other lesser Christians might just do spiritual activity. No, it's all one big group, unnumbered in a sense, a multitude of possibilities that Paul is referring to. Now, if you read the whole of 1 Corinthians, it seems that the Corinthian church prized and boasted, especially in speaking in tongues. Probably they thought that it was a mark of Christian maturity, that you'd made it. It seems that they thought that it was, in a sense, the enjoyment of heaven already on earth, speaking some form of heavenly language. And they boasted in that gift. Paul here is saying, in effect, that there are varieties of gifts. There's not just one to be prized.

And the variety shows that not everybody may have any one gift either. And Paul is, of course, attacking, I think, the Corinthian view that is wrong, that has led them to boastfulness and pride, rather than, in fact, giving glory to God and service. Because the emphasis here is that it is God the giver of the gifts. So therefore, there is no room for boasting anyway. Even if everybody did speak in tongues, it's God's gift. It's a bit like what we've seen in 2 Corinthians a little bit earlier on. Paul is talking about his ministry there. And he talks about, if I have any competence, it actually is a competence that comes from God. Therefore, I don't boast. And that ought to be the case. And Paul here is rebuking the Corinthian church in this chapter. This is not simply a section about spiritual gifts that becomes a manual for every Christian in any church in any age. But rather, it is very directly tailored to the Corinthian church to which Paul is writing in the first century. From that, we can learn. But we ought not to use it simply as the manual of spiritual gifts.

So God works in many ways, gifts, activities, services. We ought not to limit him into any particular one or nine or 27 or number of ways in which he works. And Paul sums this up in verse 7.

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Now, we ought not to read too much into manifestation of the Spirit. He's simply summarizing what the Spirit gives by way of gifts, services, and activities in the three verses preceding.

And notice that it's purpose for the common good. That is, God doesn't give a spiritual gift to me for my good. He doesn't give a spiritual gift to you for your good, whether you is singular.

[15:28] But rather, he gives gifts to his church for the common good of the church. There'll be individuals who exercise particular gifts within the church or for the benefit of others. It's for the common good that the gifts are given. Certainly not things to boast in.

Certainly not things to, in a sense, luxuriate in. Think, wow, I've got all these gifts. I'm going to put them all like little trophies on my mantelpiece, not at all. Notice again in verse 7, to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit.

One God, one Spirit, but the variety to each, to each person, to each one who is a member of the church. Now, what follows are nine gifts or services or activities that are mentioned.

As I say, it's not a complete list. There are others in the New Testament that have other gifts mentioned. It's a deliberate sample to address the concerns of the Corinthians. Also notice that some of these things are actually not defined what they are. So we need to be careful. We therefore must assume that the Corinthians had an idea what Paul was referring to, even if we might be a little bit unclear. It begins in verse 8. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, to another the utterance of knowledge, according to the same Spirit. That is, they're not in competition with each other. And again, the stress on the unity, the one Spirit, the same Spirit runs all the way through these verses. That's Paul's fundamental concern. His concern here is not actually to define in detail what is an utterance of wisdom compared to an utterance of knowledge. I think Paul actually is not necessarily being highly technical in this language. His stress is variety for the common good from the one God, unity. And here I think we could, I think if we try and go down an avenue that says, well, that's an utterance of knowledge and that's an utterance of wisdom and this is how you define that and this and they're different from each other, probably actually is taking us away from the thrust of what Paul is actually trying to drive at here. Knowledge and wisdom are things that the

Corinthians boasted in. Paul addresses that at the beginning of this letter. And he actually, in a sense, puts them down when he says, the knowledge of God, the knowledge that matters in effect, the wisdom of God are both focused on the cross of Christ. I don't think necessarily he means strictly speaking here an utterance about the cross, but what he is doing is again addressing their pride, their boastfulness in their wisdom and in their knowledge. Indeed, it seems they're ignorant and somewhat foolish throughout this letter. Paul stresses that these things come from the same spirit. They're not in competition with each other. And because they come from the spirit, they're not things in which to boast. It may be, as some say, that an utterance of wisdom or an utterance of knowledge may be for a specific situation where somehow somebody knows something that otherwise they wouldn't know. That may be it or it may be part of it. Again, I don't think Paul is using highly technical language here that's got a very tight definition. So I believe stories I've heard or people who've told me that, for example, a friend was once on an aeroplane and was sitting with somebody who wasn't a believer and suddenly thought they had a word from God about this person next to them's life, that there was no way that they would know. And it was true.

[19:12] I believe that probably did come from God. It led the person actually ultimately to become a Christian, if my memory is correct. Well, that may be an utterance of wisdom or knowledge, but I'm not sure that I think necessarily that I want to fuss about whether you put it in this category or that category or any category. I don't think that's what Paul's argument is.

It's a manifestation of the spirit of God at work for the common good and for the glory of God. The next few, and notice too, I should say that those first two are about speaking.

They're about utterances. And that's part of how Paul addressed this topic back in verses two and three. When you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak.

But now that you worship the living God and declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, you speak truth that comes from the one God. And so we ought to expect that the work of the spirit will lead to the speaking of truth, whether we call it knowledge or wisdom or both or either.

Well, the next ones on the list are a little bit more about doing perhaps than speaking. In verse nine to another faith by the same spirit. Again, notice that emphasis on unity from the one God or the one spirit. All Christians have faith. You can't be a Christian without faith.

[20:30] So clearly Paul means something beyond the normal faith of a Christian. Well, again, I don't think I want to be too pedantic about how to define this.

But certainly there may be a case of some special faith to move mountains, to pick up a phrase that's used in the next chapter. I don't think it's special faith that means somebody is a sort of great optimist. I don't think that's what Paul is on about here, about a gift of faith. It may rather be a sort of particular conviction from God that this is something that God will do or a place that he's calling us to. But in a sense, the Bible may not give us exactly that answer, but God in somehow working by his spirit in somebody's life to give them faith and a particular situation. Maybe that's part of it. Again, I don't want to be too pedantic, I think. Verse 9 goes on then to mention to another gifts of healings, literally, by the one spirit. The plural might suggest that it's not so much a permanent gift of healing that one person might have through their Christian life, but rather that periodically for different people there may be gifts of healings now, maybe not then, but maybe another time or maybe another person. And it may be miraculous, it may not be so. Again, I think the broad language of services, activities and gifts at the beginning may well for us, even though of course we live in a much more knowledgeable age about science and medicine, may well include general medical practices and so on that are done in the name of Christ, rather than something necessarily what we would call miraculous or supernatural. And then in verse 10, to another, the working of miracles. That might include healings, might be broader than healings, might include things like casting out of demons, which is one of the miracles that Jesus was involved with a number of times. To another, prophecy. Prophecy, I think, is not particularly focused on predicting the future. It'd be great if we all had the gift of prophecy so that we could make a fortune at the

TAB and give all our money to the church and to missions, of course. But I don't think that's actually fundamentally what prophecy is, both in the Old and the New Testament. It's actually a small percentage of Old Testament prophets are about predicting the future. But rather, prophecy primarily is about the application of God's word to the current. If anything, I think it most fits in with general preaching, in a sense, or especially preaching that is dealing with the issues of the world in which we live. So you see that in the Old Testament prophets. They're actually applying the earlier parts of the scripture to their day and age. They're interpreting the times in the light of the scriptures. And where that happens, I think, whether that's in preaching in a church pulpit or in a public forum or whatever, that, I think, most closely fits in with what biblical prophecy is actually about. It's the preaching of God's word in the interpretation of the times in which people live. And that here is another gift. And again, it's a gift of speaking. To another, the discernment of spirits. Well, remember that not every miracle comes from God. It strikes me that so often Christians are a bit naive about this, that we see a miracle. I think, oh, there's God at work. And everybody flocks to where this miracle is or has been. But the Old Testament, as well as the New, warns us. Pharaoh's magicians perform miracles, but they weren't from God.

And we see the same in other parts of the scriptures as well. I suspect this discernment of spirits, at one level, there's basic discernment that all believers ought to be able to exercise.

[ 24 : 44 ] Does this lead people to worship Jesus as Lord or not, for example? But sometimes there's greater subtlety. And maybe that's a particular thing that's mentioned here, testing the prophets to see if they're false. Although there's an element in which all Christians ought to be doing that as well. And then comes eighth in the list note, various kinds of tongues. And this is the most controversial gift, even in recent times, and certainly it seems in the Corinthian times.

It's maybe deliberate that Paul puts it eighth in the list. For the Corinthian church who boasted in it, you'd expect it to be number one. No, no, no. Let's just put it down here. Let's keep them in their place in a sense. Let's recognize that it's one of many gifts. One of many, many indeed.

What is it? I often pray, to be honest, that God would give me the gift of tongues so that I could speak and understand Mandarin and Burmese. And when I was in Nigeria, Hausa. It's so much easier than having to be translated all the time. I imagine Jillian, who's just spent a year in Beijing, has probably thought or wished or prayed for the same sort of gift. Oh, if only, you know, I could wake up tomorrow and be fluent in all these different languages. What a glory to God that would be, that I could preach and not have to be translated. But it hasn't yet come.

Certainly on the day of Pentecost, it seems that the gift of tongues there seemed to be preaching in an intelligible language, so that people from other parts of the Mediterranean world heard people speaking in their own tongues. That may be part of it. Again, I don't think Paul is necessarily tying himself to a very tight or narrow definition. In the very next chapter, chapter 13, in that famous chapter, it begins, If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I'm a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. The tongues of mortals are of angels. I suspect that behind that is the thinking, or Paul's attacking the thinking, that speaking in tongues was speaking heavenly language.

It's the language of angels. And that I may not understand, you may not understand, but that doesn't matter because it's heavenly language. Now, Paul later on will, in a sense, I think, put the gift of tongues more firmly in its place in chapter 14.

[ 27 : 05 ] And he seems to imply there where speaking in tongues may be speaking directly to God rather than to others. It's odd that at times when I've been in churches where somebody has spoken in tongues and somebody has got up to claim a translation of that, that I would say 99 times out of 100, the translation is at the level of what you, the congregation, should be doing.

But it seems to me that if the gift of tongues is something unintelligible in Paul's language in Corinthians, it seems to be language directed to God primarily, not to the believers.

Now, there's a lot more that could be said about that. It's a gift that's prized by the Corinthians. They regarded it as a mark of their spiritual maturity, something that they boasted in. I think Paul is putting it in its place here.

He does that again in chapter 14. And the issue, I think, is that intelligibility matters, especially in the gathering of God's people. And they've misunderstood, I think, the nature of that gift, whether it was a legitimate tongue from God or not.

It's purpose and function. It's for the common good and so on. And finally, he does mention the interpretation of tongues. That somehow God might give to somebody a gift of translating or interpreting what has been said that has been unintelligible so that people understand and are edified.

[ 28 : 37 ] Now, we ought not to be put off by the strangeness of this list, especially the last couple of gifts. Don't worry if you've never spoken in tongues, never heard of anyone speak in tongues or whatever. However, that's not actually the point of this little list and this section of 1 Corinthians chapter 12.

Paul is seeking to correct spiritual pride, but he's addressing a bigger issue, really. The emphasis here, as I've said, is that there is one God and a variety of gifts.

And therefore, all the gifts, the activities, the services, however we might define it, whatever they are, I think Paul's implying that's more than just this list, they come from the one God.

Therefore, we don't boast. And there's no place to saying, I've got a better gift than yours. Because they're all there for the same purpose, for the building of the common good, as it's said here, or the building up of God's people to maturity.

How would we define what a spiritual gift is? Well, even there, the expression spiritual gift, I think, is too narrow, because Paul is addressing gifts, activities, and services.

[ 29 : 39 ] And I think any activity, service, gift, ability, however it's gained in somebody's life, when it's used for the building up of believers, or the bringing of people to faith, and for the glory of God, is regarded in this category of a spiritual thing, a manifestation of God's spirit.

It may be that you've trained for years and years and years as a pianist, but now you play in church, you lead Christian music. Well, I would say that that fits into this category. Just as if it happened, somebody woke up and suddenly had the gift of playing the piano, and they used it for the same purpose.

I don't think it matters whether you've trained and developed, or not, the gift. I mean, most people get up to preach, and they're in the process of training, or they've been training, and so on. It's not simply whether it's somehow a supernormal or supernatural thing that's arrived at you.

It's more the purpose of using it, whether it's an activity, a gift, a service, ability, whatever. Well, Paul's making a number of points. Let me summarize to conclude. God is the giver of gifts.

The triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit. They're not something simply that the Holy Spirit decides to throw around on a happy day. They actually come from the Heavenly Father, through the ascended Christ, and manifested by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus.

[ 30 : 58 ] And we don't control God. He is sovereign in this. He is Lord in this. So it's not for us to somehow manipulate the acquisition of some gift or ability or service.

God is sovereign in all of this. As verse 11 says, The word for gifts is related to grace.

Charisma, charis is grace. They're things related to grace. So there's no room for pride. There's no room for boasting. It's not something that we deserve. Our spiritual maturity will not give us greater gifts, necessarily.

They're not a sign of super spirituality. They're not a sign of superiority, either. It's an enormous variety. It's an incomplete list.

We might add hospitality, generosity, administration, helping other people, encouraging people, marriage, celibacy, ministry, leadership, music, welcoming, mundane jobs that nobody wants to do, washing the dishes for the benefit of people at church, etc., etc.

[ 32 : 07 ] I don't think we should be limited in what we define or put in to this general broad category. There is unity stressed. Not uniformity, but unity.

One God, one church, for the building up of the people under Christ the head. And that's stressed all the way through this variety of list. The purpose of them is for the common good, for the building up of Christian people, for the encouragement, the challenge, the rebuke, the urging people on in Christian faith.

Therefore, this passage is not about our head knowledge. In fact, like pretty much all the Bible, the purpose of is to practice. And so whatever ability you have, whatever gift you might have, it's not about trying to pluck a number 1 to 27 and say, that's my gift.

It's the only thing I'm going to do. That's got the wrong thinking. This is actually urging humble service, generous service, willing, active service for the common good. Using all the abilities, the gifts, the services, the experiences that we have for the sake of others and ultimately for the glory of God.

It's about cultivating a generous heart, basically, and serving whatever way best we can and not limiting ourselves to what we want to do, not necessarily even limiting ourselves to the things or the one thing that we're best at doing either.

[ 33 : 37 ] And therefore, the application is quite simply, use your gifts. Use them humbly, generously, for God's glory, for the common good. Use them to cultivate unity, use them not boastfully, use them generously.

Don't hide your gifts. Of course, one of the key things about church life, when it goes well, and we'll see a little bit more of this in the passage at the second part of this chapter next week, is that all these varieties of gifts work together so that the church is growing in maturity and its ministry and its outreach and bringing people into the church.

It's not about a paid ministry staff. It's not about ordination. They're the people who do the ministry. We just sit here and receive. Not at all. The church is about every member involved exercising their gifts, their service, their activity, for the common good, for the glory of God.

And so for it, well, for many of you, you're exercising many gifts already. For some, maybe not so. How are you serving the common good? How are you serving the church?

How are you building up other Christians? Are you doing that generously, faithfully, with some commitment? Are you aware of the sorts of things that God has given you by way of experience or ability or gift so that you may serve him as you serve others?

[ 34 : 59 ] See, there's no room, in fact, even in a largest church, for slack Christians. There's a multitude of ways in which we can serve God. And I don't necessarily confine it to Sunday nights at six, but during the week in our Bible study groups, in other groups, in leading music on a Sunday, in going on outreach, in talking to people who are not believers, in helping out with various courses or whatever it is.

There's a plethora, a whole range of stuff that we can be doing. Sadly, I think sometimes we hide our gifts under bushels, so to speak. We're a bit too selfish or reluctant to use them.

And sometimes when we do, we're a bit too boastful. This is challenging us, I think, to be serving God, to serve his people, so that the church of God grows to Christian maturity. But the last thing I want to say is that maybe where we're different from the society of Corinth in the middle of the first century AD, there I think in that sort of polytheistic pagan world, they expected the spirits, the gods, to be doing things.

I suspect that we probably suffer from the opposite default position, that we don't expect God to work or to give us a gift or whatever.

Well, here I think Paul challenges us. We ought to be people who expect God to work. I don't necessarily mean in supernatural, amazing, stunning ways, in the mundane, behind-the-scenes ways as well.

[ 36 : 30 ] And the thing is, we've got to expect him to work through us. So let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us to be a church and people within the church who are exercising generously and sacrificially the gifts, abilities and services that your spirit gives to us.

help us to do so humbly, not boastfully. Help us to promote our unity together. Help us to do this out of love for you and help us to expect you to work in us and through us for the glory of Jesus.

Amen.