

Edify. That's what we've been talking about this month. While this series has been good and beneficial for anyone to hear, it's been weighted towards those who follow Christ. If you believe that Jesus Christ took your place on the cross and rose again to give you life; if you confess that He is your Lord, then this series is especially for you. If that's not you; maybe you're investigating church or just along for the ride right now, I hope that you've been encouraged thus far and even been drawn towards God. Lean in and let yourself be open to what God may have to say to you.

Pastor Bob started this series off with a message about the words that come out of our mouth. **"Death and life are in the power of the tongue" Proverbs 18:21 ESV.** As Christians, we are called to build others up with our words, especially those in the Church. Sometimes that edification comes by way of affirming words to your brothers and sisters in Christ. Sometimes speaking the truth in love includes correction. But words that edify are always filled with grace and are purposed to build up the Body of Christ, that is the community of believers.

Last week, Pastor Bob talked about the promise of the Holy Spirit from God the Father. Being filled with grace from God gives us the power to speak grace to others, but to truly edify others requires that we are built up by the Holy Spirit. He convinces us of our need for Jesus Christ by convicting us of our sinful nature. The words of Peter have been ringing in my ears ever since last week: **"Repent and be baptized..." Acts 2:38 ESV.** That was his response to the people who asked them what they should do after he told they had crucified the Messiah.

Before I go into the Scriptures for today, I want to pause here for a moment. I pray that the Holy Spirit is convincing you of your need for Jesus Christ.

Every single person in this room or watching online today has sinned. We've all gone against God. You can call it His design, His desire, His plan, His purpose, His created order, His commands, or His way. Each and every one of us has violated it. It doesn't matter how small or big you think the offense is, the penalty is eternal separation from God.

His perfection is so entirely other than us that we cannot carry our imperfection into the presence of the Father. Even so, the Father loves us without conditions.

**"<sup>16</sup> For God [the Father] loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God."**

***John 3:16-18 CSB***

The law of our country says that we are innocent until proven guilty, but it's the other way around with God. **"...anyone who does not believe is already condemned..."** but the Father

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made a way for us through the Son. We may not have been present at the crucifixion of Christ, but our sins tie us to that moment in time.

**“...while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

***Romans 5:8b ESV***

Just like Peter told that crowd of people, we crucified Him. And it is by God’s grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit, that we are able to truly repent and turn from our wicked ways.

So if you haven’t confessed Jesus as Lord of your life, I beg you to do it today. Ask God to grant you the grace to repent and turn to Him. None of us is guaranteed tomorrow or even our next breath. Repent. Turn away from your sin and towards the Savior who took your place on the cross. Turn and believe that He died and rose again to give you life and confess with your mouth that He is Lord of your life.

Repent. And be baptized. If you missed the announcements at the beginning of service, we will be baptizing believers in two weeks. If you’ve confessed Jesus as Lord but have not been baptized, it’s time to take that step of obedience. If you’re a new believer or you answer that call to repent today, don’t wait. Be baptized!

**“<sup>38</sup> ... ‘Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”**

***Acts 2:38-42 CSB***

Peter wasn’t saying that baptism is the key to receiving the Holy Spirit, but God does not hold back the gift of the Holy Spirit when we repent and walk obediently in the way of Christ Jesus.

I could end the message right here. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached. We often ask if anyone wants to decide to follow Jesus at the end of a sermon, but why don’t I ask right now. You’ve just heard the truth. You are condemned as a sinner, but God loves you so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to take your place. Do you believe that today? Do you want to repent of your sin and confess Jesus as your Lord today? It’s nothing to be ashamed of. If you want to do that for the first time today, just raise your hand right now.

Ok. I wanted to do that before diving into the Scripture for today because we are going to look deeper at the gift of the Holy Spirit and what we traditionally call Spiritual Gifts. I’m going to start by simply reading a long section of Scripture. I’ll be reading from 1 Corinthians this morning, starting in chapter 12, so take a moment to turn there in your Bible. If you don’t have one today, there are a number of Bibles spread throughout the room under the seats. We’re not going to put these verses on the screen right now because I want you to be able to see and hear more than just a few lines at a time. Again, I’m starting at 1 Corinthians 12:1.

**12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. <sup>2</sup>You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. <sup>3</sup>Therefore I want you to understand that no one**

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speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. <sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup> For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

***1 Corinthians 12:1-11 ESV***

Let’s pause here for a moment. There was a lot of chaos happening in the Church in Corinth and they asked the Apostle Paul for help in a letter to him. His responses to their inquiry start in chapter 7 when he says,

**“Now in response to the matters you wrote about...”**

***1 Corinthians 7:1 CSB***

This section on spiritual gifts spans three chapters and concludes with instructions to bring order to the chaos of their gatherings.

You’re going to see in a little bit that Paul talks about the gift of tongues a lot in these chapters. This is different than the tongues we read about in Acts 2 where the Apostles spoke and the crowd heard them in their own languages. Paul is writing about a prayer language much like what we find in **Romans 8:26**,

**“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”**

***Romans 8:26 ESV***

Every commentary I read this week suggests that the Christians in Corinth were likely elevating the gift of tongues over other gifts. This is similar to the way some believe the gift of tongues is proof that someone has the Holy Spirit today.

But Paul points out that all the gifts come from God and He chooses who and when to give them. Then Paul goes into the body metaphor that he also uses in two other letters to Rome and Ephesus. His point is that every person in the Church is gifted by God in different ways, but no one is less important and any other one. The diversity of the Body is just as important as the unity of the Body.

Now, let’s jump down to verse 27.

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**<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. <sup>28</sup> And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup> But earnestly desire the higher gifts.**

**And I will show you a still more excellent way.  
*1 Corinthians 12:27-31 ESV***

Again, Paul points out that God is the one who appoints the gifts to the church. It's not like God gives us a gift card to the Holy Spirit store so we can get what we want. Did you notice that the list in this passage isn't quite the same as what he listed earlier. This suggests that these lists of gifts are not exhaustive but simply represent all the possible gifts that God may pour out on the members of His Church.

When Paul asks: "Are all apostles?" the obvious answer is no, setting up the reader to answer "no" to the rest of the questions as well. But it gets a little confusing after that because he says to

**"earnestly desire the higher gifts"  
*1 Corinthians 12:31 ESV***

He spent all that time emphasizing the equal value of the gifts in the Body, but now says that there are higher gifts? That's why it's important to keep reading. There are gifts that are more edifying to the body than others, and those are the gifts that should be desired. Even still, there is a better way.

Paul is not done addressing spiritual gifts, but he goes into a section that has been read at almost every wedding I've ever been to. As I read through this chapter, I want you to think about why Paul would sandwich it in the middle of his discourse on spiritual gifts.

**13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.**

**<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.  
*1 Corinthians 13:1-7 ESV***

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If you're familiar with the different Greek words for love, Paul uses agape throughout this chapter. Agape is often attributed to a Godly love or love that God has for us, but Paul uses it to describe the way we ought to love each other.

He starts out by saying that the spiritual gifts are really worthless if they are not expressed through love. It's easy to let our desire for spiritual gifts turn into a chasing after them, but it's more important to foster love in our lives. To be kind, avoiding envy, boasting, and arrogance. To be humble and peaceful and rejoice with truth. To bear burdens with others, believe the best about them, hope with them for tomorrow, and endure the difficult seasons alongside them.

It's even easier to chase after the benefits or edification that comes from spiritual gifts. I know I have. I've chased after healing of my back pain by going to healing services or churches that are known for that kind of thing. I've chased after prophetic words when I've felt stuck or like my faith was waning. I think the edification I've chased most of all has been affirmation from the teachers and shepherds who've led me over the years. I try to perform and produce and get things right so that I might be noticed and affirmed. I just want to hear that I'm good, but all this chasing only leads to disappointment and exhaustion because I'm chasing after the wrong thing.

We're all chasing something. What are you chasing? Are you chasing a certain spiritual gift? Are you chasing someone who has that gift because you could benefit from it? There is nothing wrong with desiring the gifts, and Paul even encourages that. But a gift is not something that should be chased after. It's given at the right time to the right person by God who is perfectly sovereign.

There is something we should be chasing though.

**Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts...**

***1 Corinthians 14:1a ESV***

That word, pursue, means to follow it in order to find it. To run after it, strive for it, seek it. By the grace of God and power of the Holy Spirit in us, let's chase after love. Love is the key to appropriately utilizing spiritual gifts. It is the first fruit of the Spirit.

**1 John 4:13 This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent his Son as the world's Savior. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God—God remains in him and he in God. <sup>16</sup> And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.**

**God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. <sup>17</sup> In this, love is made complete with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as he is, so also are we in this world. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one**

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**who fears is not complete in love. <sup>19</sup>We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>And we have this command from him: The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.**

***1 John 4:13-21 CSB***

As I wrap things up this morning, I invite the band to come up and the ushers to begin serving communion.

Pastor Bob mentioned last week what has been happening at Asbury and is now happening at other college campuses around the country. I watched the sermon that was preached before those students lingered at the altar. It sounded like a typical college chapel message, like the many I simply endured when I was in college. But at the end of the pastor's prayer, he simply prayed, "revive us by Your love."

It is God's love that leads us to repentance. It is God's love in us that enables us to love others. Can we commit to pursue love in every interaction. Love builds up. Love edifies. The original idea behind this sermon series was to look at spiritual gifts and even dig into a tool to help us recognize the gifts God may have given each of us, but as Paul wrote, there is "a still more excellent way."