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WINFIELD BIBLE CAMP - 2003

OUR FAITH: CHALLENGES AND CONSOLATIONS

THE CHALLENGE OF CORINTHIANS

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Study #5: Desire Spiritual Gifts

Reading: 1 Corinthians 12

Good morning, brethren and sisters! I was asked a question after yesterday's class, and I make an apology straight away; I like languages as you'll probably know and I like words, and apparently I used a word that you didn't understand yesterday, which was the word, **mantra**. Well, just imagine in the 24 hours since I was last standing here, that I'd shaved my head and put on a saffron robe, and I'm now standing before you singing, 'Hare Krishna, hare, hare, Krishna', if I were doing that, I would be singing a **mantra**. You see, a mantra is a song using a constantly repeated phrase which expresses the leading principle which you try to get into your mind. So I was talking about the two groups in Corinth, and the mantra of the knowledge group and the mantra of the conscience group, that was the principle by which they ordered themselves. I hope that clears that up and if I use any other complicated words then I apologize in advance! But please come and ask me and I'll try my best to explain them.

Now the fact that we've spoken about a mantra is interesting, because we have another one here! at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 12, and now we all know what a mantra is, then it's going to help us a bit perhaps. We've thought quite a lot about the background of first century Corinth. We've thought about the idolatry and the immorality that was there, and one of the major difficulties for those that had accepted the truth of the gospel, was that they were scorned by the people in Corinth for their belief in the Lord Jesus. What the people in Corinth tried to get them to do, was to say a mantra, was to try and get them to say, '**Jesus is accursed**', 1Corinthians 12 verse 3; and of course, you can understand why it was that the brethren and sisters in Corinth would find that difficult. What they did was they adopted another phrase, another mantra if we can call it that, and that was '**Jesus is Lord**' Romans 10 verse 9, and once again you've got these two contrasting things; either Jesus is accursed or Jesus is Lord. So we read here in 1 Corinthians 12 verse 3, 'I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed'. No one can say 'anathema Jesus', that was the phrase that the Corinthians tried to get the new believers in Christ to say. If you did say it, well, you've not got the spirit of God. By the way, it's not literally the Spirit of God, it's

a spirit of God; you haven't got a godly spirit. So it's not talking about having or not having a gift of the Holy Spirit, we need to get that out of our minds in these opening verses at least, of 1 Corinthians 12, you haven't got a godly spirit if you say, Jesus is accursed!

So the contrasting mantra, the contrasting phrase is '**Jesus is Lord**', 'no man can say Jesus is Lord **but by a spirit of holiness**', a holy spirit. Not **the Holy Spirit**, a holy spirit! Now you might want to drop back to Romans 10 because here when the apostle was writing to the Romans, he says this starting in verse 6 of Romans 10, 'The righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, 'Say not in thy heart who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above), or who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead; but what saith it? the Word is nigh thee even in thy mouth and in thy heart: and that is the word of faith which we preach'. So if we believe these things, then it is going to come out in our speech, it's going to come out in the way in which we live, it's going to be seen by the things which we do. 'The word of faith which we preach, which if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved'. So confession with the mouth that Jesus is Lord, marks out an individual as being one who had accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and was now seeking to follow Him, and the words would not come from their lips, Jesus is accursed. But in Corinth you would hear those words, it would be a taunt to the new disciples! so you can understand how the men in Corinth go around saying, 'Jesus is accursed'; it would be just that sort of 'saying', and we can understand what it was like because we live in the world where the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Father are taken just that glibly; and how easy it is for us to just fall into that pattern of speech because we hear it so much around us; and therefore, we ought to think extremely carefully before ever we use the name of the Lord Jesus Christ or His Father. So we must confess with our mouth, if we have that godly spirit that Jesus is, indeed, Lord! and it could only be made honestly in that holy spirit!

But all of that was in contrast with what was happening in Corinth itself. Idol worship involved a sort of **ecstatic worship**; we get a flavour of this back in Old Testament times, of course, with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, leaping about and cutting themselves and crying out to their god. All sorts of things were happening, it was an energetic sort of worship. Again, this is something that's not uncommon today, virtually every branch of the 'Christian' church, the so-called Christian church and other churches, have their Pentecostal movements where people throw themselves about, and they're in an ecstasy about their worship! So first century Corinth was not different from 21st century Canada or anywhere else with their frenzied and tumultuous activity of the worshippers. You might just like to look at this passage, 1Thessalonians 5, you can understand therefore, why it was that believers in Christ, seeing what other people were doing in their worship said, 'our worship must be different from that', and because they are ecstatic we are going to be extremely sober! That's how the Thessalonians were, and so the apostle says here in 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 19, '**Quench not the spirit!**', don't despise prophecy, but prove all things; hold fast to the things which are

good, and abstain from all appearance of evil'. So they had in the ecclesia at Thessalonica Spirit-gifts, but they were not being used, because the people thought that if they did use them, that it might appear as if they were like the first century idol worshippers, and as soon as we realize that the same thing could happen with us, couldn't it? We could hold back from showing the joy that we feel in the gospel lest someone should feel that we're adopting the Pentecostal method. Yet we do feel that joy in the gospel and we ought to show it! The acceptance of the gospel is not only an intellectual pursuit, it's an emotional thing; both heart and mind are involved in our belief, that the Lord Jesus is, indeed, the Lord, that He has been raised from the dead. That God is going to send Him back to the earth to establish His kingdom; and all and every fibre of our being is caught up in that! and we need to express it! and we need to show that joy that we feel! So the message of the Thessalonians comes to us, we mustn't quench that godly spirit that we feel, about the salvation which has been achieved for us, through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The problem with the Corinthian brethren and sisters is, they weren't quenching the Spirit; they were giving it free rein! and it was beginning to look as if what they were doing was like the ecstatic worship that was taking place in the idols' temples in Corinth. So these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5 are interesting in that they conclude with that verse 22, 'Abstain from all appearance of evil'; yes, show your joy in the gospel but perhaps not to the point where someone will think that you're worshipping in an idol's temple. That's going too far! so perhaps moderation in all things, but moderation doesn't mean absolute and total stultification and sobriety. It does mean showing that joy when it's necessary for it to be shown.

So if they weren't quenching the spirit in Corinth what were they doing? Well, they were using the Spirit-gifts (well you might have thought they were using them to the full) actually, they weren't. They were very selective about their use of the Spirit-gifts as we shall see; but we need to think a little bit about the Spirit-gifts. What the New Testament teaches us is that the Spirit-gifts were only passed by the authority of the apostles, so the apostles lay their hands upon those who are newly converted to the truth, and the gift of the Holy Spirit is passed by that means. The consequence of this is that once the apostles were no longer available to lay their hands on the head of new converts, then the Holy Spirit gifts could not be passed on, and therefore, within a generation, after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit-gifts died out naturally, just as those that received them went to their graves. So what this means is that there were brethren and sisters in Corinth who didn't have a Spirit-gift, just as there were many who did have Spirit-gifts, because not every individual in Corinth would have had his or her head covered by the hands of the apostles. So some had the Spirit-gifts and some didn't have the Spirit-gifts, now you can see a difficulty immediately, can't you? Those that had Spirit-gifts, those who had had the apostles' hands placed on their heads, could easily have a feeling of superiority; 'oh, the apostle laid his hands on me!', the implication being, but he didn't lay his hands on you, and you're a second class believer but I'm a first class believer. That was exactly the attitude of mind which was bred in Corinth and therefore, the apostle is seeking to answer the problems that were being

caused because of that great division which occurred within the ecclesia. So it led to rivalry, to pride, to contention, to division, and we found a number of causes now as we've gone through 1 Corinthians as to why there were divisions in the Corinthian ecclesia, some of Paul, some of Cephas, some of Apollos, and some of Christ.

So back in 1 Corinthians 12 that we read, you'll notice that the apostle starts the chapter in a way that we've already seen previously at the beginning of chapters 7 and 8; **'Now concerning'** and he's picking up a question which the Corinthian brethren and sisters have asked in the letter which they had sent to him by those three brethren. Clearly, they'd asked about Spirit-gifts or at least that's what the King James' Version would lead us to believe. 'Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant', but you'll notice that the word 'gifts' is in italics, so the actual question was, 'now concerning spirituals', and we can't be absolutely certain that the question was initially about 'gifts' or whether it was just generally about the 'spirit' that they were asking. I lean to the view that it was probably more the second, just tell us, Paul, what the spirit of a believer ought to be? how ought we to respond spiritually, emotionally to the beliefs that we've adopted?

But then Paul does go on to talk specifically about Spirit-gifts, and this helps explain and answer the question about how we should act emotionally in accordance with our beliefs. The apostle has these main points that he wishes to make:

First of all, he says the gifts, yes, have been given to individuals, but not to mark the individual out in any way, they've been given for the benefit and for the edification of **everybody**; they hadn't been given to boost that person in any way at all! His faith ought not to be affected by it, his stature ought not to be affected by it, he is, in fact, an instrument, a servant of everybody else because he's received that gift. It's not a matter of pride but more a matter of thankfulness. So that's the first point he makes - these gifts are being given **for the benefit of everybody**.

Secondly, that the gifts only had **a limited life**, they were just a passing phenomenon and they were given for a specific purpose.

Well, let's just look at the way in which he makes those two points and the arguments he uses to support them. Let's look at the first one first of all! the gifts given for individuals but for the benefit of everybody. So look at verse 7 of 1 Corinthians 12, 'The manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal'. Now when it says every man, it doesn't mean **everyone**, it means that every man who receives a gift, it was given to him for the **benefit** of everybody. So it doesn't mean that everyone was given a gift, and please don't assume that from the language used there in verse 7 of chapter 12. Those who were given the gift were given it for that purpose, to benefit everybody!

The second strand of argument that he uses to prove this same point was that the great variety of gifts (and the word that's used is '**charismata**' hence charismatic) the great

variety of gifts all came from one source, only from one. There are, verse 4, diversity of gifts, but the same Spirit; there aren't any differences. There may be a variety of gifts but they all come from one place. Not only do they come from one place, but they only have one purpose and that purpose was anything other than **confusion** and confusion is what was happening in Corinth by the abuse, the misuse of the Spirit-gifts, which is something we're going to see in a moment. The apostle now uses the analogy of the human body which is a very familiar example for him, it occurs apart from here in 1 Cor.12, in Romans 12, in Ephesians 4 and Colossians 2.

For in verses 13 and 14 of chapter 12, 'by one Spirit, are we all baptized into one body'. That now leads the apostle on to say, 'For the body is not one member, but many', and then goes on to talk about the various parts of the body and the ways in which we fully understand, so many members but one body. Many different Spirit-gifts but the purpose is to be used to edify the body, it's for the benefit of everybody, not for the benefit of the individual who has the gift, whatever that gift might be!

So,

many members - one body,
many gifts - one unifying purpose,

one object that they were intended to achieve. Interestingly, some gifts may seem **more feeble**, but they are actually the more necessary ones. Some parts of the body may seem more feeble, but actually they are the **more necessary parts**. You know, we've got two arms but we've only got one heart; I could manage with just one arm but it would be a little bit difficult if you wanted to take my heart away; I've got two legs but I've only got one brain, by all means have one of my legs, but please don't take my brain away. You can see, can't you? the point that's being made, the parts which are not so obvious, are actually vitally important, and in exactly the same way, the gifts which might not seem so showy, are really the more important ones, and the more necessary ones. What the Corinthians were doing were looking to the showy ones, the dramatic gifts, and they wished to use those if they possibly could.

So the apostle says, try to use, if you can, the **best gifts**. So he gives a list of gifts, shall we? starting in verse 8, 'To one is given by the Spirit, **the word of wisdom**, to another the **word of knowledge** by the same Spirit. To another **faith** by the same Spirit; to others gifts of **healing**, by the same Spirit, to another **the working of miracles**, to another **prophecies**, to another **discerning of spirits**, to another **diverse kinds of tongues**, to another the **interpretation of tongues**'. Did you notice anything about that list? First, is the word of wisdom and last are tongues and the interpretation of tongues, and yet it was the gift of tongues that the Corinthians wanted to use; 'earnestly covet the best gifts', the apostle advises the brethren and sisters in Corinth.

There's another list in verse 28 of the same chapter, 'and God has set some in the ecclesia first **apostles**, secondly **prophets**, thirdly **teachers**, after that **miracles**, then

gifts of **healings, helps, governments, diversity of tongues'**, and we don't even need to guess which is tail-end Charlie, do we? it's **diversity of tongues**, and that's the very point the apostle is making, that's why he says, 'first' **apostles**. That's why back in verse 8 he says, to 'one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom and if we were to covet the best gifts, if the Corinthians were to covet the best gifts, it was so they could see the importance of the Word of God and the message of the gospel; that was the gift, the ability to speak that forth to have a ready recollection of the things that they'd heard and that the Lord Jesus Christ had taught, those were the things that the Spirit was able to bring to the first century ecclesia. So we don't need to ask, do we? which are 'the best gifts'? because the apostle has told us, first of all, the **word of wisdom**.

Then he moves on to the second argument that he raises about Spirit-gifts. The first one, as we've seen was that the gifts may have been given to you as individuals, but the benefit was to be for everybody. Therefore, it was not to boost the status or the stature of the individual, but it was to build up the body of Christ. The second line of argument is, but the gifts are just a passing phenomenon; they might seem like a bright star in the sky, but they're really just a comet that's blazing its trail and will burn itself out over a period of time. These gifts are going to cease. Chapter 13 verse 8, 'Love never fails: but where there be gifts of prophecy, they shall fail; where there be gifts of tongues, they will cease; where there are gifts of knowledge, it will vanish away; they're all going to go over a period of time! The reason for that was that the gifts had a limited purpose. You see, they provided the message of the gospel with an authority which otherwise it might not have had; if you'll just think of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, the command that He gave to His disciples right at the end of the gospel of Mark, Mark 16 and the last two verse of that gospel read, 'So then after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, **the Lord working with them** and confirming the Word with **signs following**'. The Lord was working with them and that was what the Spirit-gifts showed, that the Lord was with them! Well, surely we need the Lord with us, it's not a very happy message, is it? to say that this is going to cease, if it means that what also ceases is the Lord no longer works with us? If the Lord goes not with us, we don't want to go up; just like Moses expressed, as they were about to enter into the Promised Land. 'We want you with us, LORD!' he said, and we wish that the LORD will be with us too! But of course, He can be! He is! He promised that He would be!

You see, the gifts were no longer necessary once that **which is perfect is come**, that's back in 1 Corinthians 13 verse 9, 'we know in part and we prophesy in part', and if you think about that from an individual point of view, that was true! How many people were there who had been gifted by the Spirit in first century times? Hundreds? Thousands? and it needed all of those in order to promote and present the gospel message; so each must have been doing **their part**; none of them was doing it all, not even the apostle Paul was doing it all! He couldn't be everywhere at every possible opportunity, so **they knew in part**, they prophesied in part. But something was coming which would replace all of that partial presentation. 'When that which is perfect, when that which is complete, when that which is full, is come then that which is in part shall be done away'. That

which is perfect, that which is complete, that which is full, was the completion of the New Testament record, which the apostles and the disciples did not have available to them during much of the first century. Once it was complete, then as we read in the last book of the New Testament, there was no need to **add anything to it, and there was a great fear of taking anything away from it because it was complete!** It was not in part, and the gifts were there for that particular purpose, until that which is perfect had come.

So all these things were going to cease and the apostle uses, not actually in Corinthians but an Old Testament example. Just think back to the time when the tabernacle was being built. You'd got Spirit-gifted men, Bezaleel and Aholiab and others who joined with them. They were comparable to the apostles and the Spirit-gifted members of the early church. Both of them were working to build something up, Bezaleel and Aholiab and their companions were building up the tabernacle. The apostle and the Spirit-gifted members of the early ecclesia were building up the ecclesia of God, the house of God. So the tabernacle is like a model of the ecclesia. The ecclesias, we know, are the house of God, the apostle told Timothy that in his letter to Timothy and once the tabernacle was completed then everything that went on there provided instruction in godly things; you no longer needed Bezaleel and Aholiab, you no longer needed the Spirit-gifted workers who helped them because once that was set in motion, then everything about a godly life was being taught to the people by the offerings and by the annual calendar (the religious calendar in Israel). In exactly the same way, once the ecclesia has been established on a firm footing, and the Word of God is completed, then it also can run and we now have the information that's available to us, as to how we should live a godly life, and how we should deal with our brethren and sisters and how we should bring glory to our heavenly Father, and we do not currently need someone with a gift of the Spirit, or endowed with the Spirit, to tell us how we should act and how we should behave. It's all set out for us in the Word of God. So the Old Testament's example is very helpful in just explaining what happened with the passing away of the Spirit-gifts, in just the same way those abilities that were enhanced in Bezaleel and Aholiab and the ability they had to tell the workers the purpose of their work, that was no longer needed, once the tabernacle and the Law of Moses was complete.

But if these things were going to pass away, it was very important that the apostle taught them something else, and that is, that something was going to remain! Remember what their original question had been, if you just duck back to verse 1 of 1 Corinthians 12, 'Now concerning spirituals, brethren, I would not have you ignorant'; concerning the spiritual life, I would not have you ignorant'. Now he's telling them about the spiritual life - these are the things that abide! So what does abide? Concentrate, he's telling the Corinthians, on those qualities that will outlast Spirit-gifts, because if Spirit-gifts are going to pass, by definition they must be less important than the things that are going to remain! That makes sense, doesn't it? the throw-away plate is secondary to the china plates you're going keep; the china plates are much more important, it's longer lasting and you therefore, show more care and attention to it. You

put it in your fancy glass cabinet, because you want to look after it properly. But you wouldn't do that with the throwaway plate because you know it's not going to last.

So **faith, hope and love** should be the **aim of all believers!** those who have the Spirit-gifts and those who hadn't. In fact, if you had Spirit-gifts it was as important that you showed these qualities, just as important as it was for the brother or sister who had not been endowed with a Spirit-gift. But the strange thing is that even with faith, hope and love, not all of those are going to abide! and this in a sense is the most dramatic and startling message that the apostle is teaching. Some of them **will pass away!** and what he's telling them is that the greatest of these is **love**. What exactly is he saying? now I've tried to tabulate this and I hope this will be of some help:

LOVE'S THE GREATEST

	Apostolic Age	Before Christ Returns	Kingdom Age
Spirit-gifts	Yes	No	* ?
Faith	Yes	Yes	No (rewarded by sight)
Hope	Yes	Yes	No
Love	Yes	Yes	Yes

So we've got three columns, one is talking about the situation when the apostles were there and able to pass on Spirit-gifts. Then we've got a period of time after the death of the apostles and when the Spirit-gifts have died out, the period of time before the return of Christ (so it's in that column in which we're living), and then the Lord returns and the kingdom is established and the kingdom age is the final column on the right. So what we want to ask ourselves is, 'how things fit into those columns?' Let's think of **Spirit-gifts** first of all: were they available in the apostolic age? and the answer is, yes, they were! Are they available in the period in which we live? no, they're not! the apostle says, they are going to vanish away, they're not going to endure, they're going to pass. Will they be available in the kingdom age? Well, there's an asterisk and a question mark there, so that's going to be answered by the time we get to the end of this slide. The Spirit-gifts were available just for a limited period of time.

What about **faith**? in the apostolic age? Well, yes, of course! Now? Yes, yes, we do need faith! don't we? in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the kingdom age? No, because faith will have been rewarded by sight; those things in which we believe will have been fulfilled. It will no longer be a time hallmarked by faith, but instead by the reality that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the earth, and the Word of the LORD is issuing forth from Jerusalem.

What about **hope**? in the apostolic age? Yes; now? Yes; in the kingdom age? No, because that for which we hope will then be fulfilled and hope is not there in the kingdom age. So faith and hope are going to pass!!

And **love**? Oh, yes, love has got to exist, hasn't it? It's got to be there all the way through, both in the apostolic age, before the return of Christ and in the kingdom age; that's where it flourishes at its greatest! So the fact that the Spirit-gifts are going to fade away, even the things that abide, one of those is the greatest, and it's greatest because it will issue forth right into the kingdom age!

Let's just answer the * asterisk, shall we? Presumably the Spirit-gifts will become available in a form for the immortal saints, the Lord Jesus who is Spirit will come forth and all that He does will be spiritual! So there's a sense in which those Spirit-gifts will be seen again, and that, of course, is the prophecy of Joel, isn't it? 'in the last days, the sons and daughters will prophecy just as they did at the first, and that was something that Peter indicated in his speech on the day of Pentecost. So the Spirit-gifts which the Corinthians had were being abused. They were consecrating on the one that was least important, and they were using their gifts in a way that caused and fostered divisions in the ecclesia, so how's the apostle going to deal with this? although it's the least important gift; frequently they were using tongues.

Now what are gifts of tongues? Well, Pentecost is, of course, the example for us. Those verses in Acts 2 verses 7 and 8-11, they tell us that **it's being able to speak in a foreign language**. 'We hear, each of us in our own tongue, the dwellers in Parthia and Media and Pontus and Galatia', and all those places from where the Jews had gathered on the day of Pentecost, they heard the wonderful things of God in their own language and that was the gift which the apostles were granted by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them; and when the gift of tongues was passed upon individuals by the putting on of the apostles' hands, it was that gift of language that was passed on to them. But in Corinth, it appears that it was not that gift that was being used, so not only were they abusing the Spirit-gifts, they were misusing the Spirit-gifts. You see, 1 Corinthians 14 verse 2, 'He that speaks in an unknown tongue, speaks not unto men but unto God; no man understands him! He speaks mysteries in the spirit', the apostle says. This is the phenomenon which has been given a name, it's called **Glossolalia**. That word comes from the words that we actually get in 1 Corinthians 14, when it talks about speaking in tongues then it uses two Greek words, 'laleo' (2980) which is speaking, and 'glossa' (1100) which is tongues, and so Glossolalia, speaking in tongues, but it is **not** the speaking in tongues of Acts 2, which was speaking in foreign languages. **This is gibberish, this is ecstatic language! this is words that have no meaning**, and those two words 'laleo-glossa' only appear in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 12 to 14, apart from the references in the Acts of the apostles that we thought about, about speaking in tongues and the Lord's command to His disciples, that they'll would be able to speak in tongues and foreign languages, and if they were bitten by serpents then no harm would come to them, you'll remember the passage. But apart from that, only here in these 3 chapters in 1 Corinthians, is this spoken about and we're to separate between its use in Corinthians from its uses else where, because here the apostle is

saying, the gift was being misused and it was appearing in a different form; it is now, indeed, glossolalia, and not speaking foreign languages. As we've already described, it's emotionally charged speaking that uses words that have no meaning. Again, a whole variety of different religions, that have their Pentecostal movement (they may not call it a Pentecostal movement) and they will speak using glossolalia. So Hindus do it, and Buddhists do it, and Jehovah Witnesses do it, there is glossolalia in all forms of religion. It's something that Christadelphians shouldn't do, is they shouldn't speak in glossolalia, because it's totally unscriptural. It's common today in Pentecostal churches.

So how do you tackle the problem? What did the apostle do? Well, he uses again, two very simple arguments: the first one, he said, remember that the purpose of gifts is that they should **edify**, speaking in tongues can only be edifying if the person hearing it can understand what's said, and if the foreign language needs to be interpreted, well you mustn't speak it unless the interpreter is there! and one of the Spirit-gifts were interpretation of tongues, it seems as if the two went hand and glove with each other. You can understand why, can't you? So verse 28 of 1 Corinthians 14, 'If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the ecclesia and let him speak to himself and to God', so unless it can be understood then don't use the gift.

The second point was that tongues are **assigned to unbelievers** and not to believers. Just as Acts 2 showed, the apostles were able to speak in languages that all those Jews gathering from different parts could understand, and at the time, they did not believe that the Lord Jesus was the Christ. But the message of the apostles was to teach them that! so it was **a sign** to the unbelievers that these who were speaking in the language which was not their native tongue, were in fact, speaking with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that was the sign that they were indeed His apostles, His disciples. 1 Corinthians 14 verse 22, 'Wherefore, tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not'. So what about this 'speaking in tongues', you see, those that do claim both in Corinth and the first century and today in the 21st century claim to speak in tongues, soon become **arrogant**, and they say, 'you know, we feel sorry for you, you've not got this ability, we encourage you to enter into this 'la, la' speech that we're using, because that shows that we've been touched by the Spirit of God! Well, it may show that they've been touched, but not touched by the Spirit of God! So don't believe that sort of claim! They looked down on anyone who hasn't received this blessing that they believe they've received; in the end the gift becomes more important to them than the Word of God itself. Once we put the Word of God on one side, we can no longer be reprov'd, it's like casting off all restraint, and we can do whatever feels good to us, and we know that as soon as we want what's good for us, it's bad for us! It just follows naturally, doesn't it? and so it's bad for them too! It's tragic and they become **know-alls**, and you can see how this fed into the 'knowledge party' in Corinth, can't you? it was something that boosted their ego, and made them look 'big'. Knowledge may make a man look big but **love** makes him grow to his full stature, as we saw yesterday. So that's the problem of speaking in tongues!

There was actually, and the apostle refers to it here out of 1 Corinthians, a very good

Old Testament example of this. 1 Corinthians 14 verse 21, 'In the Law it is written, With men of other tongues and by other lips I will speak unto this people'. You might just look at Isaiah 28 (just very quickly because I notice the time is gone) Isaiah 28, because what's happening here is that people in their worship had moved so far away from God that they were just entering a sort of drunken revelry just as the people in Corinth were at their idols' temples. They were deriding the prophet Isaiah's message and in the same breath were deriding God Himself, just as those in Corinth were saying 'Jesus is accursed'. So those in Israel were deriding God; He is no longer powerful, He is no longer working on our behalf. So God promises to speak to the nation now by another language, verse 11, 'For with stammering lips and another tongue, God will speak to this people; to whom He said, 'this is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear'. So they were going to be spoken to in another language, it will be a sign to people who did not understand, just in the same way as the gifts were to be a sign to those who did not believe in first century times. So this wasn't a new method that God was using, it was a very real method, but the Corinthians were not using it in that form; they were following this glossolalia.

So he says to them that God is not the author of confusion! In the section in chapter 14 from verse 26 to 33, he tells them how to control the use of Spirit-gifts, within ecclesial worship. Interestingly, he used that word 'confusion' which is an echo back in Genesis and the story of the tower of Babel, which lead, remember, to division and scattering! God is **not the author of confusion**; God is calling you to peace, He doesn't want you all in your separate parts or speaking different things. He wishes you all to be together speaking with one voice and one mind, and having one heart. If we want to know about the spiritual life, then that's what it is - **build up into one body in Christ**. So amongst all of these gifts, 'earnestly covet the best gifts, verse 39 of 1 Corinthians 14, 'wherefore brethren, covet to **prophecy**; forbid not to speak with tongues', because just as he said to the Thessalonians, 'quench not the Spirit', 'but let all things be done decently and in order'. But, of course!

Then, just very briefly in deed, there was an associated problem; because if this was the way in which you dealt with Spirit-gifts, 'let them speak by one or two and let another interpret', what about Spirit-gifted sisters? Could they take their part? Well, the apostle deals with it, could they speak in tongues in ecclesial meetings? NO, he says, verse 28, 'the tongue speaker had to remain silent, 'if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence (Gr.sigao-4601) in the ecclesia'. He was not permitted to speak and in just the same way, because of the way divine authority has been delegated from God, to Christ, to man, to woman, 'So let your women, verse 34, 'keep silence (exactly the same word), in the ecclesias. It is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the Law'.

So all of these points of advice which the apostle puts forward are for that purpose. You want to know about the spiritual life? but by all means show the joy and the rejoicing that comes from our acceptance of the gospel message. 'But let all things be done decently and in order'.