

The Church That Jesus Is Building.
The Teamwork Of The Church - Pastor Roger Ridley
Gretna Baptist Church, Gretna, NE, August 14, 2005

It has been exciting to see the progress that has taken place with our building! Hasn't it? To the casual observer it may appear that only one thing has been getting done at a time. However, since starting, several things have actually been going on at the same time in order for our building project to reach the goal of completion. In the weeks ahead, this will become even more obvious as electricians, plumbers, the builders, and even many of us perform different tasks, but each actually working toward the same goal of completion. It is a process that takes time, with different people doing different things in order for the whole project to come together.

We find the same thing in the Church that Jesus is building. There are a lot of things going on that the casual observer never sees, but it is all necessary to the process that leads to the completion of the plan Jesus has for His Church.

You and I fit into that plan. We have a part in the process which leads to the completion of the project.

Ephesians 4:7-8...

1 Peter 4:10...

Romans 12:3-6 tells us that we have each been gifted, that our gifts are different, and that we need to use them.

You and I have a part in the Church that Jesus is building, both as individuals, and as a congregation. Far too many Christians don't seem to realize this. They seem ignorant of the fact that God has gifted them, and that they are needed for the completion of the Church.

Of all the New Testament passages which address this, none do a more thorough job than 1 Corinthians 12. Please open your Bibles to...

Verse 1 begins...

This chapter is intended to dispel ignorance among Christians by providing us with **lessons** that are foundational to our part in the local church.

I . As Christians, we serve under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The starting lesson is provided in the first 3 verses...

As Christians, by the Spirit, we speak of and serve under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of the body that the Holy Spirit has placed us into, and has gifted us to be a functioning, and valuable part of it.

This is entirely different than our former non-Christian experience. Two things were true of us: (1) We were gentiles; we were not God's people. And (2) We were led by dumb idols. Idols that could not speak, could not see, could not hear, could not feel, and could not do anything for us. Is it any wonder that such a condition would leave us feeling empty and useless?

But, we must now begin to understand that our circumstances have changed. God the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives, enabling us to profess Jesus Christ as Lord. Our ability to say that is significant. It means that we belong to Him, that He gives us meaning and purpose in life, and that He is the One who is directing us. **That** makes each of us special, because He is special!

The hymn writer, Harriett E. Buell, expressed it this way, *"I once was an outcast, stranger on earth, a sinner by choice, and an alien by birth; but I've been adopted, my name's written down, an heir to a mansion, a robe, and a crown. I'm a child of the King, a child of the King! With Jesus, my Savior, I'm a child of the King!"*

II. As Christians, the Triune God is at Work in Us.

A second lesson follows quickly behind this in verses 4-6...

Our giftedness as Christians is the work of the Triune God. There are many different gifts that can be used in many different ways, to accomplish many different things. But, it is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit who is working in all of that, in all of us.

Consider Romans 12:3, *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."*

Rather than feeling that I am better than others, or envying what others are able to do, I am to understand that the Triune God is at work in my life, and that alone is cause for rejoicing.

In Luke 10, Jesus sent 70 disciples out, two by two, to minister in His name. They came back full of excitement because of the things they had done. But listen to what we find in verses 17-20, *"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. **Notwithstanding in this rejoice not**, that the spirits are subject unto you; but **rather** rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."*

When we rejoice in what we're able to do, we forget why we're able to do it. When we rejoice in WHO is at work in our life, then we're just going to be happy that He has chosen to work in us at all.

III. As Christians, We are Gifted for the Profit of All.

A third lesson is provided in verse 7...

The Spirit has gifted each of us, for the profit of all of us.

Under the Lordship of Christ, as a part of His body, we have not been gifted for our own pleasure, or our own profit. There is no question that we will find pleasure in doing what He has gifted us to do, and there is no question that each of us will personally profit from the use of our God-given gifts, but the focus is not on us, the focus is on the whole body.

I like what Richard Baxter had to say to fellow preachers, all the way back in 1656. As he challenged them to study and to preach, he said, *“If you did this for your own sakes, it would not be lost labour; but I am speaking to you upon the public account, that you would do it for the sake of the Church (Richard Baxter, The Reformed Pastor, The Banner of Truth Trust, reprinted from the 1862 edition, page 61).”*

What he said to those, gifted as preachers, can be equally said to every believer. Our gifts will profit us personally, but they are meant for the profit of all. Romans 12:6-8 exhorts us, *“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.”*

However the Spirit has gifted us, let us use it, and let us use it as God intended, for the profit of all!

IV. As Christians, it is the Spirit who Decides how we are Gifted.

There is also a fourth lesson to be found in verses 8-11...

Our giftedness is the Spirit’s decision, not ours.

How you and I are gifted is not our choice. That upsets some because we live in a society that teaches us that we should be able to do whatever we want to do. But remember, we are no longer gentiles, and we are no longer led by dumb idols. You and I, as God’s children, are now under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We serve Him and not ourselves. Also, we are gifted by God, not for our own personal benefit, but for the profit of all. And according to the will of God the Spirit, you and I are gifted in just the way that will **most** benefit the whole body of Christ.

That should encourage us because God has given us a niche, a place where we fit, an ability that is just right for us, where we are able to contribute to the success of what He is doing in this world, and through this local church. Don’t look at a brother or sister in Christ and wish that you could do what they do. Consider instead, how the Holy Spirit has gifted you to make a difference in people’s lives.

I think of Korah and his family in Numbers chapter 16. They were jealous of what God was doing through Moses and Aaron. They wanted some of their public visibility, and they voiced their complaint. In verse 9, Moses responded, “*Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?”*

God had separated Korah and his family, and was using them in a unique and special way in service to the whole congregation of Israel. But, they weren't happy because, to them, it was too small and insignificant. Because they were looking through eyes of selfishness and envy, they couldn't see how vital and important their part was in the eyes of God. Let's be careful not to show such dissatisfaction with God's choice in our lives.

V. As Christians, we are Gifted Differently because as a group, it takes a lot of parts to get the job done.

A fifth lesson is gained from verses 12-20...

There are many gifts, because it takes a lot of parts, for a body (the body of Christ, the Church) to function properly. Simply put, we can't all have the same gift. Ephesians 4:11-12 teaches us, “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*”

In order for the perfecting of the saints to get done, in order for the work of the ministry to get done, in order for the building up of the body of Christ to get done, it takes a lot of different people doing a lot of different things. That is why we are gifted, not according to our desire, **but** His good pleasure. God knows what needs to be done, and He knows how He wants to use each one of us to get it done.

Growing up, I always enjoyed watching Star Trek. In one of the older episodes, there was a group of beings, which had evolved such high intelligence, that they only consisted of a brain. They had no body, no arms, no legs, no eyes, no hands, and as a result, life for them became very uninteresting, so they lured other people to their planet, so that they could use the various parts of their bodies to do what they could not do.

If we were all just one part, if we were all gifted in just one way, we would be very limited in what we could actually accomplish.

VI. As Christians, every one of us is Important.

There's one more lesson that I want you to see, found in verses 21-27...

Every part is necessary to the overall success of the body.

I'm reaching an age where I'm beginning to understand this lesson far better than when I was younger. My ears don't work the way they used to work, and quite often, I have to depend on others who can hear better than I can hear. My eyes don't work the way they

used to work, and quite often, I have to depend on others who can see better than I can see. My joints don't move with the same ease they used to move, and so, quite often, I'm happy to depend on others who can move with greater ease. I say these things only to illustrate that once a part of the body begins to suffer, it is then that we best understand just how important that part of the body is.

Every part of the body of Christ is important. Each gift that the Spirit has bestowed is needed for the body to function properly. No single one of us is insignificant. Every single one of us is vital to our overall success as God's people, and as a local church. You may be small in your eyes, you may even be small in the eyes of others, but God knows just how important you are. That's why He has gifted you the way He has.

Conclusion - As Christians, we operate under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Every member of the Godhead is at work in us. Each of us has been gifted for the benefit of all of us. None of us are so important, that we don't need the rest, and none of us are so insignificant, that our absence would not affect the rest.

Based on this, I want to ask some questions:

- # 1. By the Spirit, is Jesus Christ your Lord?
- # 2. Do you understand, that the Triune God is at work in your life?
- # 3. You are gifted, are you doing your part for the profit of all?

Your answer to those questions is very important to you, personally, but please do not miss the point. Your answer is also extremely important to everyone else in this local church. Either this local church will be all that God wants her to be because everyone is doing their part, or she will do the best she can in a limited way because only some will try to carry the load of the whole.

If Jesus is your Lord, and the Triune God is working in you, and the Spirit has gifted you in just the right way for the profit of all, then don't let self-imposed ignorance be an excuse for inactivity. Understand that you are gifted and begin to exercise your gift that we might continue toward the goal of completion, which Jesus has for us.