

12:1: *Now concerning spiritual (gifts), brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*

As noted in the commentary on 8:1, Paul often said “*now concerning*” when introducing new subjects and answering questions. Here we have a new subject, but we do not know if this new topic was a response to questions asked by the Corinthians. We do know that Paul did not want these Christians to be “*ignorant*” about “*spiritual gifts*.” He wanted them to be well informed about gifts from the Holy Spirit and to apply this knowledge. The discussion about spiritual gifts is found throughout this chapter, as well as chapters 13-14.

Paul often used the word *ignorant* (*agnoeo*) when giving corrective instructions to congregations (see how this same term is used in Rom. 6:3; 7:1; 1 Cor. 10:1; 1 Thess. 4:13; etc.). Here Brown (2:406) said Paul wished “to end his readers’ lack of knowledge by making them share in his knowledge.” The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (1:21) said, “I want you to know,” “You should know.” Since *ignorant* is a present tense verb, Paul did not want these Christians to *remain* in a state where they were confused (he wanted to clear away any misunderstandings).

The word “*gifts*” does not occur in the original text so it is italicized in some translations. Translators probably supplied this word because supernatural gifts are the main subject in chapters 12-14. The Greek text literally says, “*the spiritual*.”

The word *spiritual* (*pneumatikos*) is an adjective and it often contrasts what is spiritual with what is physical, secular, or sinful (compare 3:1; Rom. 7:14; 1 Cor. 9:11). Since the grammar of this verse can be interpreted as neuter (spiritual things) or masculine (the spiritual men), it may be best to understand the thought as: “*now about the things of the Spirit*.” Paul could have been thinking of “spiritual people” or “spiritual gifts.”

Since the book of First Corinthians uses the word *spiritual* more than any other New Testament letter, it seems this term “held a special significance for the Corinthians. Paul, as well as his opponents, contended that some people were more ‘spiritual’ than others. While the opponents believed that such spirituality evidenced itself in the speech or knowledge of a person, Paul showed that true spirituality first and foremost is demonstrated in loving and caring for one’s fellow human being” (CBL, GED, 5:230). This point is especially visible in the next chapter. For the other places where *spiritual* occurs in this letter, see 2:13 (the word is used twice in this verse), 2:15; 3:1; 9:11; 10:3, 4; 14:1, 37; 15:44 (the word is used twice in this verse); 15:46 (the word is also used twice in this verse).

12:2: *Ye know that when ye were Gentiles (ye were) led away unto those dumb idols, howsoever ye might be led.*

This verse is based upon the Corinthians’ lives before converting to Christianity. Before becoming members of the New Testament church, these readers had been “*Gentiles*” (unsaved—outside of Christ. Compare Eph. 2:11-12). During this time they were “*led away*” by “*dumb idols*” (perhaps they had gone from idol to idol). The word *dumb* (*aphonos*) meant “*speechless*.” This same term is associated with lambs (Acts 8:32) and donkeys (2 Pet. 2:16). Some Old Testament references that describe the senselessness of idolatry include Ps. 115:4-7; 135:15-17; Hab. 2:18-19.

Paul said the Corinthians “*knew*” (*oida*, a perfect tense verb) this information. That is, these Christians were fully aware of their former way of life. Since they had left what was wrong and embraced what was right, they should have had the common sense to stay with what they knew was true. Today this point still has application. When people are led out of the occult, snatched from atheism, brought out of agnosticism, delivered from a mystic religion or freed from denominational error, they should *know* what they have left and faithfully cling to the one true way. Unfortunately many find the truth, cling to it for a while, and then eventually forsake it for “another gospel” (Gal. 1:6). Paul spoke of this problem in Gal. 4:8-9: “*Howbeit at that time, not knowing God, ye were in bondage to them that by nature are no gods: but now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again?*”

“Led away” (*apago*) in the middle of 1 Cor. 12:2 is a present tense verb; the KJV translates this “*carried away*.” Jesus used this same word in Mt. 7:13 (the broad way *leads* to destruction). Idols cannot lead people away into false religion because they are lifeless statues; the power behind them, however, is more than sufficient to enslave people. As shown in the comments on 10:19-20, idols are merely a front for Satan and his helpers. For a time the Corinthians had been in “the power of darkness” but were “translated into the kingdom of Christ” (Col. 1:13) by hearing and obeying the gospel.

Many might think being enslaved to Satan is an unpleasant experience, and oftentimes this is true. In modern times some people in pagan tribes have been known to throw their children into a river for the crocodiles to secure a blessing from their idol. The Corinthians, however, seemed to have enjoyed at least some of their demonic enslavement. Rienecker and Rogers (p. 428) said *led away* “suggests moments of ecstasy experienced in heathen religion, when a human being is possessed by a supernatural.” False religion and sin can be fun; if people did not enjoy what Satan offered, they would not be apt to remain in his kingdom. In western culture many of the *idols* people follow are the gods of fashion, the gods of pleasure, and the gods of wealth, sports, recreation, self-esteem and worldly honor.

Some of the enjoyment from false first century religions, just like now, focused on ecstasy. As with the modern Pentecostal movement, those in the first century sometimes had “religious experiences,” one of which would be parallel to the modern claims involving “tongue speaking.” Gentiles made unintelligible sounds and babbling was seen as a divine sign. Jesus may have alluded to this practice in Mt. 6:7 when He said “*Gentiles*” thought they would be heard for their “*much speaking*.” *Much speaking* (*polulogia*) is found only this one time in the New Testament and Spicq (1:279) defined it as “unintelligible muttering and stammering or of prattling on unreflectively.”

As shown in the commentary on 12:10b, 12:10c, God’s definition of tongue speaking was speaking in languages someone had never learned. Senseless babbling was a pagan practice induced by a human or demonic force. The Corinthians, just like members of the modern Pentecostal movement, apparently found this type of thing to be pleasurable, but Paul said the Corinthians had abandoned this type of thing for the truth. For additional information about tongue speaking and some of the false claims associated with it, see the *Questions and answers about tongue speaking* located in the commentary prior to 1 Cor. 13.

Today people must realize that Satan is still trying to lead people away by false religion. Many do not seem to realize that Satan can look “like an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14) and his “ministers” may appear as “ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:15). Stated another way, some of Satan’s false religion masquerades as Christianity or takes the form of a religious experience. This author has spoken with many people who believed God had provided them a “sign,” or they received a special experience from God, and their “divine sign” could not be questioned. If something seems religious and feels good, many automatically believe it must be from God, even if they are conclusively shown that the Bible contradicts their claim. Satan uses these kinds of things to deceive people, so we must put our entire faith and trust in God’s word (Mt. 7:24) instead of signs and experiences. Genuine faith is always grounded in and harmonizes with the gospel (Tit. 1:1; 2 Thess. 2:13).

The problem of spiritual deception is so great that Jesus specifically warned about it in the Sermon on the Mount. In Mt. 7:22-23 Jesus said, “*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*” If we believe that Jesus told the truth, “*many*” will be deceived. A high percentage of people will have sincerely believed they did “*many mighty works*” by His “*name*.” In spite of what a large number of people will believe about being faithful to Jesus and working miracles by His authority, the Lord will say He “*never*” knew these people. Even now Satan is deceiving many who think they are serving Christ. The devil is an expert at leading people astray with false religion and much of his religious deceit is a slightly altered form of pure Christianity.

The Corinthians had been delivered from their religious error, but Paul realized they were being led astray by a new problem: The misuse of spiritual gifts. Thus, this chapter, as well as the next two, deals with this topic. The Corinthians’ situation should remind us that (1) Satan does not want people to know

or obey the truth (Mk. 4:15; Lk. 8:12) and (2) he wants to overthrow the faith of those who have found and are trying to stay with the truth (compare 2 Tim. 2:18).

The end of this verse says, “*howsoever ye might be led*” and this expresses another important point. *Led* in 2b (*ago*) is an imperfect tense verb and it indicates someone or something had helped bring these Christians into idolatry. Perhaps friends or relatives helped *carry away* (2a, KJV) the Corinthians into false religion. False priests could have previously encouraged the members of this congregation to become involved with their pagan practices. The Corinthians’ society likely exerted pressure to conform to the idol worship that was prominent in this culture (compare Rom. 12:2). Today a similar problem still exists: Many forces try to lead people into a false religion. Whenever people are *led* (2b) into anything but Christ and the truth (Jn. 8:32), they are *led away* (2a) into a false faith that is part of Satan’s kingdom.

The opening verses in this chapter present a contrast. The Corinthians had formerly worshipped powerless idols and used to be servants of Satan; they had exchanged these things for God and the power of the gospel. Instead of continuing to serve idols that could not speak, they served a God who gave powerful gifts such as the ability to speak in other languages (“tongues”), plus gifts such as prophecy. Like the Thessalonians (1 Thess 1:9), they had “turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God.”

12:3a: *Wherefore I make known unto you, that no man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema;*

As noted in the preceding comments on verse 2, the Corinthians had formerly been led astray by false religion. After they had embraced God and the Christian faith, these Christians had received the “*Spirit of God*.” While the Corinthians had learned much about the Christian faith and had some spiritual gifts, they did not have what we possess: A fully revealed New Testament (this is described as “the perfect” in 1 Cor. 13:10). Because these Christians lacked the entire New Testament, there was a danger that someone could claim he had received a new message from God or was speaking under the power of the Holy Spirit, and these Christians needed to accept this “new revelation.” Here Paul said that these kinds of claims had to be approached with caution. Paul said there was a test for people who claimed they were speaking for God and Paul said the Corinthians already knew this information. The word translated “*make known*” (*gnorizo*) meant “reasserting things already known.”

The Living Bible offers this paraphrase of verse 3 which helps explain the overall thought: “*But now you are meeting people who claim to speak messages from the Spirit of God. How can you know whether they are really inspired by God or whether they are fakes? Here is the test: no one speaking by the power of the Spirit of God can curse Jesus, and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and really mean it, unless the Holy Spirit is helping him.*”

If someone (even an angel—compare Gal. 1:6-9) ever gave negative information about Jesus, while claiming to be under the influence (leading) of the Holy Spirit, the man and his claims were to be rejected. No one under the Spirit’s influence would ever say negative things about the Lord because the Holy Spirit regards Jesus as perfect (2 Cor. 5:21). It would be contradictory for the Holy Spirit to affirm the sinlessness and purity of Christ on one occasion and then deny these things at another time. Some of the Corinthians may have been making disparaging statements about Jesus and claiming their “facts” were from the Holy Spirit. Whatever the claims, Paul said the information was to be verified and then rejected if it did not correspond to the truth the Corinthians had received.

The comprehensiveness of this instruction is found in the word “no” (*oudeis*). *No* is a compound word. The first part of this term (“*ou*”) expresses an “unequivocal negative” (CBL, GED, 4:408). The addition of the next two letters (“*de*”) has the force of “not even.” The final part of this word (*heis*) makes the thought “no one, not even to the number one.” Here it literally means *no one*. No matter how righteous a person seemed to be, no matter how wealthy he was, no matter how long someone had been a member of this congregation, no matter how highly someone might have been recommended by others, and no matter if someone was a best friend or even a spouse, the word “no” meant “no exception” or “no exemption.” This verse leaves no doubt that those who were under the Holy Spirit’s influence never taught something

that was wrong or partially true. Such was impossible because the Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of truth” (Jn. 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

At the time this material was being readied for publication about 25% of the Pentecostal (charismatic) movement professed the “Jesus only” doctrine. This belief says there is no Godhead. Stated another way, many Pentecostals affirmed that Jesus is the Father, Jesus is the Son, and Jesus is the Holy Spirit. Since this belief is not substantiated by the Bible (Peter lists all three members of the Godhead in 1 Pet. 1:2 and Jesus said He would “go to the Father, Jn. 16:10), those who hold to this belief cannot, as they claim, be “filled with the Holy Spirit.” If the Holy Spirit were guiding those who believe the “Jesus only doctrine,” they would not deny the doctrine of the Godhead, a term the KJV uses in Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:20; Col. 3:9. Readers may also wish to compare 1 Jn. 2:22: “*Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, (even) he that denieth the Father and the Son.*”

The first part of 1 Cor. 12:3 is reminiscent of Deut. 13:1-5, a passage associated with false worship. If a man told the people of Israel to worship other gods (Deut. 13:2), God said the person was condemned and was to be punished by death. Even if the man could predict future events and perform miracles (Deut. 13:1), God said the man was to die because God was not the source of his power (Deut. 13:5 says such a man was in “rebellion” to God). Many often think supernatural signs and claims are proof that someone is working with and for God, but the New Testament warns about “lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9). Today, anyone who teaches things contrary to the New Testament is to be rejected no matter how persuasive he is or how great his claims are (Gal. 1:6-9).

The word translated “*anathema*” (*anathema*) in the middle of this verse is only found a few times in the New Testament (Acts 23:14; Rom. 9:3; 1 Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:8-9). It was associated with items devoted or dedicated to divine wrath and destruction. Here it describes a request for Jesus to be delivered to the Father for destruction (annihilation). It was a way of “cursing Christ.” If a person made this or any other type of negative statement about Jesus, or pronounced a curse upon the Lord, he could not possibly be “speaking by the Holy Spirit.” People who act in this manner “have become the mouth and instrument of demonic powers” (Brown, 1:414). Allen (First Corinthians, p. 148) suggested that people may have said *idols* were giving out negative information about Jesus. If this explanation is correct it helps explain why Paul said idols were *dumb* (speechless), verse 2. Paul wanted the Corinthians to remember—1b—that they had to distinguish between the divinely inspired utterances discussed in this section of the letter and the false ecstasy coming from other sources. Barclay (First Corinthians, p. 118) noted how synagogue prayers regularly included a cursing for all heretics and apostates and how this would have included Jesus, at least in some places (compare Acts 26:11).

Today the Holy Spirit no longer directly leads men or inspires them to speak (the end of the miraculous age is discussed in the commentary on 13:8, 9, 10), but the principle in this verse is still true. If someone is a genuine Christian, he or she will not say anything negative about Jesus or teach anything contrary to the gospel given by Jesus and His disciples (compare Gal. 1:8-9). Also, Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians teach us to avoid association with those who claim to speak for God but teach doctrinal error, even if the error seems slight. God’s Spirit cannot be involved with any type or form of inaccuracy, so God’s people should be watchful for what is false and avoid these things (compare 1 Thess. 5:21). Jesus is associated with the “truth” (Jn. 14:6) and this must be true for us if we want to be His people.

In the second letter to this congregation (2 Cor. 11:13-15) Paul spoke of *false apostles* (2 Cor. 11:13-15). There were men who appeared to be religious and godly, but they were spiritual charlatans who had Satan as their spiritual father. Today there are still people (some of whom are ministers) who masquerade as servants of Christ. Because religious imposters exist, we must test and confirm what people teach (1 Jn. 4:1-3; 1 Thess. 5:21) and always remember that Satan is like a “roaring lion wanting to devour” as many people as he can (1 Pet. 5:8). New Testament books such as Second Peter and Jude show that Satan sometimes consumes Christians and congregations by false teachers and their false doctrine.

12:3b: *and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit.*

Here Paul said no man can say Jesus is “Lord” except by the Holy Spirit (the ASV says “*in the Holy*”

Spirit”). This thought might be best explained by first showing what Paul did not mean. Paul was not referring to people who can literally say, “*Jesus is Lord*.” Neither did he mean that anyone who can say “*Jesus is Lord*” has the Holy Spirit. An atheist can say *Jesus is Lord*, but such a man will not be saved because he lacks faith (Mk. 16:16; Heb. 11:6). Jewish exorcists, among whom were seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-16), were also able to say *Jesus is Lord*, but this did not give these men the Holy Spirit. A similar reference is found in Matthew 7:22-23. Though many will have literally called Jesus “*Lord*” while living upon the earth, Jesus will affirm He *never* knew them. No one needs special powers or abilities to acknowledge or profess the Lordship of Jesus.

The point is explained by the first part of the verse where Paul said anyone *speaking under the Spirit’s influence* would not teach error or say anything untrue about Jesus. Here Paul made this point again, but he approached the subject in a *positive* way. That is, if people *were truly under the influence of the Spirit*, they would only say things about Jesus *that were true*. If anyone under the Spirit’s influence spoke about Jesus, they might describe Jesus as “*Lord*” (they would attribute the right position to Jesus). Unlike the Jehovah’s Witnesses who believe Jesus is “*a god*,” those who were inspired by the Holy Spirit affirmed Jesus’ deity (compare Jn. 1:1). Inspired men never said or wrote anything false when they were guided by the Holy Spirit.

Since the spiritual gifts are now gone (see this discussed in the commentary on 1 Cor. 13:8-13), we now have God’s completed word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3). If we are truly speaking for God, we will always strive to say things that harmonize with the gospel. No one who seeks to speak for God will say things that are false (untrue). Faithful Christians (and this is especially true for preachers) diligently work to know the truth and then seek to fully and accurately convey this information to their hearers because they seek to be servants of Christ. There will be times when preachers make mistakes because the time of inspiration has passed. When error is discovered, it must be abandoned, no matter how difficult that is. This is the right choice because Jesus is *Lord*. Jesus is to be the king of our lives. We confess this prior to becoming a Christian (1 Tim. 6:12; Acts 8:36-38; 10:9-10), and we submit to Jesus’ Lordship throughout our entire lives (Lk. 9:23).

12:4: *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

This section of the letter indicates the Corinthians were abusing some of their supernatural gifts. Tongue speakers (and perhaps others) turned their gift into a performance (compare 13:1-3). Some had become arrogant (13:4) and others failed to exercise restraint (compare 14:32). Here in 12:4-6 Paul emphasized two things: All the supernatural gifts could be traced to one source and all the miraculous abilities were designed to benefit God’s people. Since all the supernatural gifts came from God, and they were all designed to benefit Christians, no gift was to be despised or seen as inferior to another gift. It was also wrong for the Corinthians to use the gifts to exalt themselves. Just as Samson’s special strength was not given for his own pleasure (Judg. 13:5), or Solomon’s knowledge was not designed to let him showboat (1 Kgs. 3:9), so the spiritual gifts were designed to help others.

The word “*diversities*” (*diairesis*) meant “*distribution*” (Kittel, 1:185). This term occurs only two other times in the New Testament (verses 5 and 6 in this chapter) and it means the Holy Spirit *distributed* supernatural gifts to various Christians. Gromacki (p. 151) said *diversities* “*implies division, distribution, allotment, or apportionment.*” The distribution of supernatural gifts is also mentioned in Heb. 2:4 and illustrated in Acts 2:1-4. God distributed the right gifts to the right people, but the Corinthians misused some of these abilities and this resulted in chaos and conflict (compare 1 Cor. 14:33).

The word “*gifts*” (*charisma*) is a noun and it is found only in the books of Romans, First Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, First and Second Timothy. Peter used it one time in 1 Pet. 4:10. Kittel (9:403) said this term “*is always*” related to things associated with salvation and this word is “*linked*” with *grace* “*on the one side*” and *spirit* “*on the other.*” In other words, the Corinthians received their supernatural *gifts* due to a combination of God’s grace and power (compare Jas. 1:17). It was imperative for these Christians to remember that their special abilities came from only one source: The one true God.

While most of God’s gifts to man have not been miraculous (compare Mt. 5:45), as demonstrated by

the following chart, God did give some first century saints supernatural abilities. In the New Testament we find at least 16 different miraculous gifts.

Key passages on gifts (this list includes both supernatural and natural abilities)

1 Cor. 12:8-10	1 Cor. 12:28-30	Rom. 12:3-8	Eph. 4:7-11
Word of wisdom	Apostles	Prophecy	Apostles
Word of knowledge	Prophets	Ministry	Prophets
Faith	Teachers	Teaching	Evangelists
Gifts of healings	Miracles	Exhortation	Pastors and teachers
Workings of miracles	Gifts of healings	Giving	
Prophecy	Helps	Ruling/ leadership	
Discerning of spirits	Governments	Mercy	
Tongues	Tongues		
Interpretation of tongues	Interpretation of tongues		

The gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12:8-10 are all supernatural; the lists in 1 Cor. 12:28-30, Rom. 12:3-8, and Eph. 4:7-11 contain a mixture of supernatural and non-miraculous abilities and offices. While the gifts in 1 Cor. 12:8-10 help explain how spiritual gifts helped the first century church sustain itself without the completed New Testament, the information in 1 Cor. 12:28-30 deals with those who received the gifts or the offices they held. The information in Rom. 12:3-8 deals with both natural and supernatural gifts and many of the duties that went with them. Some functions such as the *apostles* and *prophets* were limited to the same period as the supernatural gifts (the first century) while other functions such as *teachers* continued without the gifts. Naturally talented men are now able to use the completed New Testament to carry out the functions of *ministry*, *teaching*, *giving*, *exhortation* and *leadership*. The final column (Eph. 4:7-11) refers to both naturally and supernaturally gifted men who fulfilled various functions in the church.

There are no longer any living apostles or prophets today because these men became a permanent part of the “church’s foundation” (Eph. 2:20). Jesus dealt with a similar matter when talking about the rich man and Lazarus in Lk. 16. He said the rich man’s brothers “*had* (a present tense verb) Moses and the prophets” (Lk. 16:29). Although Moses and the prophets had been dead for many years, these men still existed through their writings. We find this same truth being expressed about the apostles in Mt. 19:27-28: “*Then answered Peter and said unto him, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*”

Jesus is sitting on his throne **now** (Acts 2:30-35) and the apostles are reigning **now**; the apostles reign and judge through the letters they wrote (the New Testament). There have been many replacement preachers, teachers, elders, deacons, and faithful Christians since the church started, but the apostles, prophets, and miraculous signs were limited to the first century era. Apostles and prophets created a “foundation” (Eph. 2:20), just like the signs were given to prove the gospel was true. The foundation does not need to be laid again and the signs do not need to continue to be given. God has “written down” the miracles (Jn. 20:30-31) and we are to “believe” them, just as we accept what has been written down about the apostles and prophets.

Many do not understand the power of God's written word or have forgotten passages such as Jn. 11:47, a verse that says "*chief priests*" and "*Pharisees*" acknowledge that Jesus was "doing many signs." What these officials said is "a marvelous admission. Even our Lord's worst enemies confess that our Lord did miracles, and many miracles. Can we doubt that they would have denied the truth of His miracles, if they could? But they do not seem to have attempted it. They were too many, too public, and too thoroughly witnessed, for them to dare to deny them. How, in the face of this fact, modern infidels and skeptics can talk of our Lord's miracles as being impostures and delusions, they would do well to explain! If the Pharisees who lived in our Lord's time, and who moved the heaven and earth to oppose His progress, never dared to dispute the fact that He worked miracles, it is useless to begin denying His miracles now, after eighteen centuries have passed away" (Ryle, John, 2:334). The miracles witnessed by Jesus' friends and foes are now preserved for us in the Scriptures and they are one of many proofs to believe Jesus is the Messiah. For more information on how the completed New Testament replaced the miraculous age, see the commentary on 1 Cor. 13:8-13.

12:5-6: *And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all.*

While the Holy Spirit gave different gifts to the members of the first century church (verse 4), Jesus was also involved in this process (verse 5). The word "*ministrations*" (*diakonia*) is translated "*administrations*" in the KJV. Paul also used this word in 16:15 ("*minister*"). This term may have described the different "*offices*" (i.e. the apostles, prophets, inspired teachers, etc.). The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (3:303) suggested it means "*all of the ministries in the Church.*" Thayer (p. 137) defined it as: "of the ministration or service of all who, endowed by God with powers of mind and heart peculiarly adapted to this end, endeavor zealously and laboriously to promote the cause of Christ among men, as apostles, prophets, evangelists, elders, etc."

Just as all the supernatural gifts did not have the same purpose, the positions in the church did not all have the same purpose. There were men who "ruled" (1 Tim. 3:5) in a local congregation (compare Acts 14:23). These men were referred to in six different ways: Elders, pastors, bishops, shepherds, presbyters and overseers (these different words describe the different facets of their work). There were also special helpers (servants) called deacons (1 Tim.3:8). Other men were "evangelists" (preachers). For more information about elders and deacons as well as church organization, see the commentary on Phil. 1:1. The Corinthians may have felt the gifts of the Holy Spirit were the most important thing in the church, but the *ministrations* from the "*Lord*" were just as important.

The word "*workings*" (*energema*) in verse 6 is translated "*operations*" in the KJV. This noun occurs only here and verse 10 and in both places it is associated with spiritual gifts. It meant "divine powers" or "the operation of the Spirit" (Kittel, 2:653). At the end of this verse this word occurs in its verb form ("*worketh*") and it again describes "the divine workings of God" (CBL, GED, 2:436). Additional information about the verb form of this word (*energeo*) may be found in the commentary on verse 11. Paul repeatedly reminded the Corinthians of how God was the energy or power source behind their gifts. This point is also seen in verse 7 where *given* is a present tense verb. If God did not continue to energize the supernatural gifts, the power to speak in tongues, prophesy, heal the sick, etc. would have instantly stopped. As shown in the discussion on 1 Cor. 13:8-13, God has withdrawn the power that energized these supernatural gifts.

At the end of verse 6 the ASV and KJV express the thought in a similar way ("*all things in all,*" ASV and "*all in all,*" KJV). Other translations such as the NIV translate this phrase as "in all men." The ASV and KJV seem to express the correct idea: God was the power source behind these gifts (the supernatural abilities could not have existed and functioned without Him). *God, who worketh all things in all* also seems to imply that the gifts came from God.

Paul specifically referred to the *Spirit* (verse 4), the *Son* (verse 5), and the *Father* (verse 6). Since all three members of the Godhead have been involved with redeeming man (readers may wish to refer back to "*Paul's appeal to the Father and the Son in First Corinthians 11:3*"), it is not surprising to find all

three being involved with the supernatural gifts. The Holy Spirit is associated with *giving* the gifts (verse 4), Jesus is associated with being the *administrator* of these abilities (verse 5), and the Father is associated with the *operational* part of the gifts (verse 6). Later in this chapter (verse 11) Paul spoke of how the Holy Spirit also had a hand in energizing the gifts. Since there is no competition in the Godhead (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit demonstrate true “unity in diversity”), the Corinthians should not have been competitive about their gifts.

MacKnight (p. 184) suggested that Paul wanted these Christians to understand that idols (verse 2) “could not endow them with the gift of tongues; and that if the priests and prophets of these idols ever uttered any oracles, it could not be by the inspiration of these lifeless stocks and stones, but by the inspiration of evil spirits, who gave them these oracles to confirm mankind in their abominable idolatries.” For additional information about tongue speaking see the commentary on verses 10b and 10c in this chapter, the commentary at the end of this chapter, and the information located in the commentary on 1 Cor. 14:2.

12:7: *But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal.*

The ASV and KJV treat this verse quite differently: The ASV begins with “*to each one is given*” and the KJV places these words in the middle of the verse. *Each one* does not mean every single Christian at Corinth. It means supernatural gifts were given to “all kinds of people—men, women, old, young, Jew, Gentile” (Holman, 7:214), just as Joel prophesied (compare Acts 2:16-17).

The word “*given*” (*didomi*) is used in many New Testament verses. In some cases (and here is an example) it may be considered a “divine giving or blessing from either God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit” (CBL, GED, 2:126). For other passages that have this same verb and this same meaning, see Mt. 6:11 (the necessities of life come from God); Acts 3:16 (physical healing has come from God); Acts 14:17 (rain comes from God).

In this verse *given* is a present tense and passive voice verb. This indicates the Corinthians were continuing to receive supernatural help and God was the sole source of this supernatural activity (verse 6). Since the gifts could only come through God’s power, the Corinthians had no basis for being proud or boasting about their miraculous abilities. The word translated *given* is used again in verse 8 and is also expressed with the present tense and passive voice—more proof that the Corinthians had no reason to boast about their miraculous abilities.

Manifestation (*phanerosis*) is found only here and 2 Cor. 4:2; here it describes the spiritual gifts possessed by the Corinthians and the Holy Spirit’s using them to reveal and confirm the New Testament. The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (3:414) described *manifestation* as “the *revelation* of the Spirit.” *Manifestation* indicates the Holy Spirit’s gifts were “for the common good” (Brown, 3:323) and they worked in several different ways (compare verses 8 and 11). At the end of this verse Paul specifically said the supernatural abilities were designed “*to profit withal*” (i.e. the gifts were designed to benefit the church internally and help Christians evangelize the world).

Profit withal means “*for* (someone’s) *advantage*” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 780). Since *profit* is a present tense verb, God always wants His people to continually be profited (helped) by what is done in the assemblies. Spiritual gifts were one means to accomplish this in first century times, but now we accomplish this by using the “word of His grace” (Acts 20:32), the completed New Testament.

In the comments on 11:20-21 it was shown how food and fellowship meals were associated with cliques and factions at this congregation. In this section of the letter we find indications that division was also tied to spiritual gifts. Just as Paul had to condemn a refusal to share food (chapter 11), so he had to correct Christians who used spiritual gifts for personal benefit or glory (compare Acts 8:19, 24). In this chapter the Corinthians were told all their gifts came from a single source (verses 4-6, 11) and their abilities were to *profit withal*. He then reinforced these points in the next chapter by discussing love and the temporary nature of spiritual gifts.

Many of the Corinthians were acting like children (they wanted the gifts the Holy Spirit had given to others). Because “*Spirit*” had chosen who received what gift, the Corinthians were to be satisfied with

God's will in this matter. Rather than seek an understanding of why the Holy Spirit gave specific gifts to certain members of this congregation, the Corinthians should have accepted their gift(s) with thanksgiving and properly used whatever they received. This information is also relevant to us. We can wonder and whine about why we did not receive a natural ability like someone else has, why we have fewer assets than someone else, why someone else has better health, seems to face fewer problems, etc. If we are a "one talent man" (Mt. 25:24-28), we must be satisfied with our single talent and use it to the best of our ability. We also should not complain about the Spirit's decision to NOT distribute spiritual gifts to us today.

12:8: *For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit:*

Here Paul reminded the Corinthians of how all the supernatural gifts of the Spirit were being “given” (*didomi*), a present tense and passive voice verb, “*through the Spirit.*” The passive voice means God was the sole giver of these gifts. The present tense means God had to continually energize the gifts (these points are also discussed in the commentary on verses 4-6). God was not only the sole force behind the gifts, He had specific purposes for their use. These purposes included helping fellow Christians (see the latter part of verse 7 and 14:3-4) and evangelizing the world (Mk. 16:15, 17-18, 20; Acts 2:4, 7-8). *Given* is parallel to the word “*set*” in verses 18 and 28.

Some have attempted divide the supernatural gifts into categories, three of which are *speech*, *intellect*, and *faith*, but all attempts to do this are surely impossible. Since these gifts have not been seen in more than 2,000 years, and we do not fully understand what some of them were, it is impossible to accurately categorize them. Chrysostom, who lived just a few hundred years after the first century (345-407 A.D.), commented on how difficult it was to fully understand the gifts even in his day because they had ceased. Supernatural gifts existed for about 70 years after the church was established and then disappeared so quickly and completely that the details about them are gone. Our inability to fully understand or explain some of the gifts is just one more proof that they are truly gone. For a fuller study on the cessation of spiritual gifts, see the commentary on 1 Cor. 13:8-13.

The first two gifts seem to describe the reception of divine revelation (i.e. the information we now have recorded in the New Testament). Paul described these gifts as the “**word of wisdom**” and the “**word of knowledge**.” Both of these gifts involved a *word* (*logos*). McClintock and Strong (9:954) said *word* meant “*sermon, discourse, utterance.*” The CBL (First Corinthians, p. 415) said *word* “denotes not only expression, but time and place, beginning and end. The gift operates in a particular setting and time.” Paul did not specify when and where the *words* of *wisdom* and *knowledge* were used, but 1 Cor. 14:30 suggests these gifts were used during times of worship and study. This might make them parallel to the instruction Christians now receive through sermons and Bible classes.

The word *wisdom* (*sophia*) often denoted what is prudent and sensible (compare Lk. 16:8), but here it describes “a spiritual gift” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 759). It seems this ability involved the reception of doctrinal information. Allen (First Corinthians, p. 149) said the *word of wisdom* refers to “the gospel or system of truth made known by the apostles (2:6-13)” and this conclusion seems to be confirmed by 2 Pet. 3:15. Charles Hodge (First and Second Corinthians, pp. 245-246) correctly observed how the gift of wisdom “in its full measure belonged to the apostles alone; partially, however, also to the prophets of the New Testament... The characteristic difference between these classes of offices was, the former were endowed with permanent and plenary, and the latter with occasional and partial, inspiration.”

Some believe the *word of wisdom* also involved the “practical skill in the affairs of life, and in particular in the things of Christ. It is the supernatural ability to see how to handle a particular situation as the Spirit directs” (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 415). Stated another way, the *word of wisdom* may have given Christians the ability to make wise decisions about Christian living. This was especially important because the church was new, persecution was sometimes fierce, and the New Testament was not yet complete. MacKnight’s explanation of this gift (p. 185) is perhaps best: The “*word of wisdom* was the doctrine of the gospel, communicated by inspiration so completely, that the spiritual person who possessed it, was enabled and authorized to direct the religious faith and practice of mankind infallibly. It holds the first place in the catalogue of the spiritual gifts, because it was the greatest of them, and was peculiar to the apostles, having been promised to them by Christ, as the effect of the constant indwelling of the Spirit.”

Without a completed New Testament first century Christians needed this gift so they would know “divine truth in its totality, of the ends and purposes of God, of the plan and work of redemption, of the revelation of salvation through Christ in its connection, its divine system and organism” (McClintock and Strong, 9:954). This point is illustrated in Acts 2. People became Christians, but since there was no New Testament to study, they had to “steadfastly” receive instruction in “the apostle’s doctrine” (Acts 2:42).

The apostles authenticated their teaching with miracles (Acts 2:43).

Unlike the first century Christians who “knew in part” and “saw darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12), we have the completed New Testament. Jude described this as the “faith delivered once for all time” (Jude 3). Peter said we have all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). Paul said the Scriptures give us all we need (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Through the completed New Testament we have the word of the gospel (the *good news*, Acts 15:7), the word of truth (Col. 1:5), the word of grace (Acts 14:3), the word of promise (Rom. 9:9), the word of life (Phil. 2:16), the word of righteousness (Heb. 5:13), the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19), the word of salvation (Acts 13:26), the word of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18), and the word that abides forever (1 Pet. 1:25). God’s revealed word is also called “the Spirit’s sword” (Eph. 6:17). Since the faith of the New Testament has now been fully revealed (Jesus said the apostles would receive all the truth—Jn. 16:13), the supernatural signs possessed by the first century Christians have been replaced. The information once accessed by spiritual gifts is now received through the Bible.

If the *word of wisdom* described doctrinal matters, the *word of knowledge* (*gnosis*) was probably the application of this knowledge to daily life. A person may know facts, but if those facts cannot be applied, they are of little use. Warren Wiersbe (First Corinthians, p. 608) said the *word of wisdom* and the *word of knowledge* gave people “the ability to understand and apply God’s truth to a definite situation.”

First century Christians, just like God’s people today, had many questions about Christianity—questions about elders and their qualifications, preachers and their work, widows, church benevolence, church discipline, evangelism, church attendance, the after-life, Jesus’ second coming, how to worship, moral questions, and how to deal with various problems. God wants His people to have the “wisdom from above” (Jas. 3:15), so He provided the first Christians with spiritual gifts while the New Testament was being written. A similar thing was done during Old Testament times.

When the Old Testament system of religion was being constructed, God gave highly skilled craftsmen supernatural abilities to aid in the construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 31:1-6). God also allowed the nation to use the “Urim and Thummim” (Ex 28:30). Solomon (1 Kgs. 3:12) was given an extraordinary amount of wisdom. When Christianity was introduced to the world God’s people again needed divine aid so a variety of supernatural gifts were given (Heb. 2:4). Since we now have God’s perfect and fully revealed word, the “partial” information offered through spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 13:8-9) has been removed. For additional information on the completion of the Bible and the temporary nature of spiritual gifts, see the commentary on 1 Cor. 13:8-13.

It seems that Paul’s list of spiritual gifts in verses 8-10 is not arbitrary. As the Baker’s Encyclopedia of the Bible (4:1994) noted, “Paul mentions wisdom and knowledge first presumably because the Corinthians made so much of them, as it clear from 1:17-2:13; 8; 13:2, 8. Paul clearly thinks they have the wrong idea of wisdom, understanding it as rhetorical skill or eloquence (1:17, 19, 20; 2:1, 4, 5) or as a this-worldly sophistication (1:20, 22; 2:5, 6, 13). The wisdom by which believers should live is the wisdom of God, the wisdom expressed in God’s plan to achieve salvation through Christ, that is, through the crucifixion of Christ and the proclamation of the crucified Christ (1:20-25, 30; 2:6-8). . . . Lest his readers think of divine wisdom as something that they possess and can use at will, Paul narrows his description of the spiritual gift to ‘utterance of wisdom’ (12:8). That is to say, the gift is not wisdom itself but the utterance that mediates the recognition and experience of God’s saving purpose to others (2:4-7:13).”

While the list begins with the *word of wisdom* and the *word of knowledge*, it ends (see verse 10) with information on “tongues and tongue speaking.” Contrary to the Pentecostal claims that tongue speaking is a very valuable spiritual gift and should be diligently sought, Paul put tongues (the ability to speak in another language) at the bottom of this list of spiritual gifts. The Corinthians certainly valued tongue speaking, but they were told tongues were a lesser gift (1 Cor. 14:5). Paul also said tongues could fail to edify others (14:2-5) and not understanding the tongue (language) made the gift unprofitable (14:6-15). In fact, if not used properly, tongue speaking could cause confusion (14:16-19) instead of edify others. For more information about tongue speaking see the commentary on 12:10b; 12:10c, the special study on tongue speaking at the end of chapter 12, and the information located in the commentary on 1 Cor. 14:2.

12:9: *to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit;*

The third supernatural gift in this list is “**faith**” (*pistis*). In the New Testament *faith* is used in many different ways. Sometimes it describes the *belief* people must have to please God (Heb. 11:6). This personal faith is not “faith alone.” It is a faith that combines personal belief with obedience (Jas. 2:17, 20, 24, 26). We also find references to the “*one faith*” (Eph. 4:5) “*delivered to the saints*” (Jude 3). This *faith* is an objective standard (a specific set of beliefs and instructions) for all Christians. If Christians follow this *faith* (way), they will have unity (Jn. 17:20-21). Paul described this objective standard as a “*common faith*” in Tit. 1:4.

The *faith* in 1 Cor. 12:9 was “a special gift of faith that is the possession of a select few” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 664). It was an unquestioning belief in God’s power to enable the performance of miracles, many or all of which were especially noteworthy. It seems this gift is mentioned again in 13:2 (this *faith* could “move mountains”). We are not given much information about this gift, but the very wording indicates people had the ability to accomplish extraordinary things and to act without hesitation or doubt (compare Acts 3:1-6 and Jas. 5:14-15). Readers may also wish to compare Matt. 17:20; 21:21; 19:11.

Some think the *gift of faith* was also associated with times of intense persecution—during times of almost indescribable brutality (Christians were used as human torches or sewn in animal skins and then ravaged by wild beasts) this gift gave Christians special courage and allowed them to die with boldness and confidence. This suggestion is too fanciful for serious consideration and it is also inconsistent with Heb. 11:32-39 (others faced similar things and there is no indication they received any type of supernatural faith). Too, this gift involved *faith*, not *courage*. Although the gift of faith is quite different from the abilities described in verse 8, it still came from the Holy Spirit.

Paul described the *gift of faith* with the word “*another*” (*heteros*), a term that refers to “someone else” (Lenski’s translation). This word is well illustrated by 1 Cor. 15:39; 2 Cor. 11:4; Rom. 7:23. Here *another* seems to indicate that some Christians possessed only one gift from the Holy Spirit (compare verse 11). The Holy Spirit determined who received what gifts (verse 11), and He apparently determined that some people needed or should have only one gift. The Holy Spirit may have also determined that some were not fit for any supernatural gift.

The fourth gift in this list is “**healings**” (*iama*). The ASV translates this “gifts of healings” (notice that both *gifts* and *healings* are plural—this reflects the fact that both words are plural in the Greek text). Knowing that both words are plural may indicate there was more than one type of gift to heal sickness and that people could heal a wide variety of medical problems.

The word *healings* is used only here, verse 28, and verse 30, but the verb form of the word (*iaomai*) occurs more than 20 times in Matthew-Acts. Christians who had this ability were able to cure the sick (leprosy, blindness, palsy, etc.). The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (2:170) described this gift as “a special capability of individual members of the congregation.” Compare Acts 19:11-12 and Acts 28:8.

Some have asked whether the gift of *healing* included the power to raise the dead. This is possible, but if Christians had the power to raise the dead (and we never read about this being done by anyone other than an apostle), it is probably associated with the next gift (miracles). All healings were miracles, but not all miracles were healings. As stated in the commentary on verse 8, the gifts have been gone for more than 2,000 years and we do not have some of the specific details about what they did or how they operated.

12:10a: *and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discernings of spirits;*

Five different gifts are listed in verse 10; the first of these is the “**workings of miracles**.” *Workings* (*energema*) is found only here and verse 6. This word may be defined as “divine powers” or “the operation of the Spirit” (Kittel, 2:653). While there were many special gifts from the Spirit and virtually

every gift could be loosely classified as a *miracle*, this ability was especially unique. *Miracles* (*dunamis*) points to something beyond medical miracles; some have suggested it refers to “the exorcism of demons” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 1:357). This gift may have also included the power to inflict judgment upon the wicked (Acts 13:9-12) or been associated with raising the dead. This ability could have also been related to the miraculous faith described in 9a. Whatever the exact nature of this ability, it definitely described great power. All miracles were extraordinary, but these signs seem to have been especially impressive.

Some have wondered if this ability was somehow related to “nature miracles.” Just as Jesus had walked on the water or calmed the raging sea, so similar things were possible with this gift. While this is a possibility, this author knows of no evidence to support this idea. We do have Paul saying there were “signs of an apostle” (2 Cor. 12:12), and these special signs were very possibly somehow associated with the gift described as *miracles*.

Gift six in Paul’s list is *prophecy* (*propheteia*). It is commonly assumed that prophecy allowed someone to predict future events, but this explanation is only partly correct. *Prophecy* was mainly associated with speaking for God (i.e. an inspired person revealed some part of God’s will). In the first century church, because the New Testament was in the process of being written, prophets were one means of instructing Christians in what was right and wrong. Prophecies were messages “inspired by the Spirit and given in a present situation” (CBL, GED, 5:361). In this verse *prophecy* is a noun. We also find the noun form of this word being used two times in the next chapter (13:2, 8) and twice in chapter 14 (see 14:6, 22).

Prophecy is also used as a verb about 30 times in the New Testament (*propheteuo*) and about half of these passages are in this letter. The CBL noted how the verb form of *prophecy* was connected “with the oracles at places like Delphi. Typically, a person would ask a question of the gods and receive a cryptic answer from the female mouthpiece of the deities. This answer would then be completed and interpreted by the men who specialized in that task” (CBL, GED, 5:362). In these situations *prophecy meant* “explain a message from the gods in response to a client’s question” (ibid).

In the New Testament the verb form of *prophecy* described God’s revealing some information to man. “The word implies intellectual content, such as teaching or exhortation (1 Corinthians 14:2, 3). At times, it can carry additional ideas: the unfolding of hidden knowledge inaccessible to mere humans (Matthew 26:68); or the foretelling of future events (Luke 1:67)” (CBL, GED, 5:362).

The word *prophet* occurs in the New Testament in several different forms. Another noun form of the word (*prophetes*) is a fairly common New Testament word and this term is found a few times in this letter (1 Cor. 12:28, 29; 14:32, 37). There is also the word *prophetikos* (an adjective found only in Rom. 16:26 and 2 Pet. 1:19). We also find *prophetis* (a noun meaning “prophetess”—this term occurs only in Lk. 2:36 and Rev. 2:20) and *prophthano* (a verb that is found only in Mt. 17:25. In the KJV this word is translated “prevented”). A simple definition for this word group is “the one who speaks before in the sense of proclaim, or the one who speaks for, i.e., in the name of (God)” (Baker’s Dictionary of Theology, p. 423). Trench (p. 21) defined a prophet as “the *outspeaker*; he who speaks *out* the counsel of God with the clearness, energy and authority which spring from the consciousness of speaking in God’s name, and having received a direct message from Him to deliver.” For more information on prophets and prophecy, see the commentary on 14:31.

The lack of a completed New Testament and the existence of false teachers created the need for supernatural gifts such as *prophecy* and the *discerning of spirits*. *Discerning* (*diakrisis*) meant “the supernatural power of spiritual insight to detect and expose satanic strategies and demonic activities” (CBL, GED, 2:83). This gift would have allowed Christians to determine whether or not someone was speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Tim. 1:7 might be an example of this—Paul knew all about these men). God tells us there are several *spirits* in the world and not all these spirits are good (1 Tim. 4:1 speaks of “seducing spirits”). Through this gift of discernment Christians could positively determine who was teaching and perhaps telling the truth (compare 1 Jn. 1:4 and 1 Thess. 5:20-21; Acts 8:22—Peter knew what Simon was thinking). Christians may have also been able to use the *discerning of spirits* to determine if some “miracles” were truly from God. Today there are still many people who make false

claims. We must now judge things with the completed New Testament. Satan is very clever (2 Cor. 11:14-15) and the Bible is our “sword of the spirit” (Eph. 6:17) to “stand against” his various tricks and schemes (Eph. 6:11).

The need for discernment is illustrated by a quotation from Eusebius (this is taken from Turner, p. 462). A man “began to fall into frenzy and convulsions. He became ecstatic and began to speak strangely, prophesying contrary to the traditional custom (New Testament truths, BP). People thought he was devil-possessed. He could not be kept quiet. He stirred up two women and filled them with the ‘bastard spirit’ so that they uttered mad, absurd and irresponsible things.” Many similar *signs* are still falsely attributed to God (compare Mt. 7:22-23), so we must now use the New Testament to make “righteous judgments” (Jn. 7:24) on what people claim and say (compare 1 Cor. 14:29).

12:10b: *to another (divers) kinds of tongues*

The word “*tongues*” (*glossa*) is used several times in the New Testament as well as secular Greek. Here in 1 Cor. 12:10 this term is used twice. In some verses *tongue* describes the organ man uses to speak (Mk. 7:33, 35; Lk. 1:64; Acts 2:26; Rom. 3:13; 14:11; 1 Cor. 14:9; Phil. 2:11; Jas. 1:26; 3:5-6, 8; 1 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:10). *Tongue* also describes life in the Hadean world (Lk. 16:24) and what took place on the Day of Pentecost after Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 2:3). See, too, how it is used in 1 Jn. 3:18. The book of Revelation often associates the word *tongue* with different ethnic groups and human speech that can be understood (see Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15).

In other parts of the New Testament the word *tongue* refers to the “tongue speaking” described here in 1 Cor. 12:10. For other verses that refer to this supernatural gift, see Mk. 16:17; Acts 2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4-6, 13-14, 18-19, 22-23, 26-27.

Tongue speaking comes from the word “*glossolalia*” (*glossa* is the word for *tongue* and *lalia* is the word for *talking* or *speaking*). This gift, which is more fully described in the following paragraphs, the commentary on 10c, the *special study on tongue speaking* located just prior to the introductory commentary on 1 Cor. 13, and in the commentary on 14:2, allowed Christians to *speak* in languages they had never learned, plus *understand* languages they had never studied. The Corinthians prized this ability, but Paul deemphasized this gift. Here in verses 8-10 Paul placed all the other listed spiritual gifts above tongue speaking and interpreting tongues. In chapter 14 he showed the uselessness of tongues (speaking in a foreign language) if people did not understand what was being said (compare 14:19).

Because Corinth was a type of “commercial crossroads” (people from many different places came to this city), the gift of tongues was a potentially very useful gift for the Corinthians. These Christians should have used the gift of tongues to communicate the gospel to the “foreigners” they met, but they abused this ability, just as they abused the fellowship meals described in chapter 11. Much of what is said in 1 Cor. 14 is also related to the Corinthians’ abuse of tongues.

God not only gave the first Christians the “great commission” (Mk. 16:15), He gave them the gift of tongues (the ability to speak in human languages they had never learned) to help them “go into all the world and preach the gospel” (Mk. 16:17, 20). Tongues allowed Christians to fully and instantly communicate with all kinds of people, some of whom were probably Persians, Scythians, Romans, Egyptians, Hebrews, etc. Today Christians are still under obligation to carry the gospel to every place, but now they either learn the needed foreign language(s) or use translators.

The expression “*divers kinds*” (*genos*) is also found in verse 28; in each of these verses this word has “the sense of ‘kind’ or ‘species’” (Kittel, 1:685). This term is one of several proofs that *tongues* were known languages and dialects, not unknown sounds or gibberish (this point is more fully developed in the commentary on 14:2). An example of *different tongues* is found in Acts 2. The apostles were able to instantly speak foreign languages and dialects (Acts 2:4, 7) as well as understand what the “foreigners” were saying (Acts 2:37). When people accused the apostles of being intoxicated (Acts 2:13), Peter knew what was being said (Acts 2:14-15). This point is also illustrated by Acts 2:42. Were not some of the “foreigners” described in Acts 2:8-12 part of the group that continued to receive instruction in the “apostle’s doctrine”? The gift of tongues allowed Christians to fully and fluently communicate with

anyone who spoke a different language or dialect.

Gromacki (*The Modern Tongues Movement*, p. 62) noted how the word *kinds* (*genos*) “refers to a family, offspring, race, nation, kind, sort, and class in New Testament usage. It always depicts that which is related to each other. There are many ‘kinds’ of fish (Matt. 13:47), but they are all fish. There are several ‘kinds’ of demons in the world (Matt. 17:21), but they are all still demons. There are many ‘kinds’ of voices (1 Cor. 14:10), but they are all voices. From this it can be concluded that there are many ‘kinds’ of languages, but they are all languages. They are several families of languages in the world—Semitic, Slavic, Latin, etc. These are all related in that they have a definite vocabulary and grammatical construction. Paul could not have possibly combined known, foreign languages with unknown, ecstatic utterances under the same classification. They simply are not related to each other.”

There have been many investigations into the claims of modern “tongue speaking” and a good summary of the conclusions is expressed in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6:597): “The evidence from modern glossolalists (tongue speakers, BP) that their speech is real language, finally, is spurious. Careful linguistic study has demonstrated that glossolalia is not a ‘real but unknown’ language, but rather ‘language-like’ in its patterning of sounds.”

Other sources offer similar conclusions. Author J. D. Thomas (*The Spirit and Spirituality*) quoted from a little booklet by Dr. Stuart Bergsma that describes the physiology and psychology behind modern tongue speaking. According to Thomas (pp. 67-68), “Bergsma first points out that physiologically, the human brain is somewhat similar to a computer, though more intricate. If a computer is overloaded, however, it will become erratic and will demonstrate ‘neurotic’ symptoms, acting like it is ‘possessed by demons,’ and thus ‘may spew out nonsense if pushed beyond its limits (p. 13). By the same token, the human brain has limits—and under high emotional strain may ‘rattle off nonsense syllables, broken phrases, pseudo language.’”

Thomas also (pp. 69-70) offered a longer but just as valuable quote from this same source:

“Many religious minds yearn for a closer contact with God, for a more intimate contact with the Holy Spirit... Identification with leaders in a group is psychologically very compelling. Religion with action, be it one that promises voices, visions, miracles, or the reward of becoming a person distinguished by almost supernatural powers of special access to the Holy Spirit by conversation in ecstasy conferred on only some of the flock, is alluring to many a mind. One is a member of an inner circle. One is looked upon with awe. Honor and respect become one’s portion.

“Especially to a religious person denied other attainments, low on the totem pole as to education or scholastic attainment, whose opinion is seldom asked in spiritual affairs, it is a distinct triumph for him to learn that he can speak in tongues... There is the stimulus of the group, the expectation, the highly pleasurable excitement, the exultation as the urge to speak becomes almost intolerable (p. 18).

“The words begin to come. One is at first aware of the sonorous cadence, the almost poetic rush of syllables, the onomatopoeia, the thrill like the first plane ride and we are lifting off the ground, we are up, we have lost contact with earth and reality. The glossolalist is now in a dissociative phase, unless he’s an absolute fraud or consciously staging an act. Most glossolalists remember nothing of this phase.”

The intense emotions associated with this activity are sometimes supplemented or reinforced with personal instruction. Gerald Straub describes some of this in his book, *“Salvation For Sale”* (the following citations come from this source).

When Straub “asked how this baptism of the Holy Spirit actually happens” (p. 235), he was told the Holy Spirit was received “during special ‘Life in the Spirit’ seminars. This short course in spirituality ran for seven weeks, and it was imperative that I attend each class” (ibid). Straub also noted how the “dropout rate for those who begin the course is very low” and this “less-than-slick presentation seems harmless and gives no sign of being a carefully calculated plan to lead the participant into a new dimension of faith” (ibid).

Straub’s group used “a manual that was developed and produced by a large prayer community in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the national headquarters for the Pentecostal movement within the Catholic church. The group had no official ties with the church and acted solely as a collection of individual Catholics who were faithful members of the church carrying out their own private enterprise of salvation. The manual is

a 183-page book that left absolutely nothing to chance. It was designed for use by the team members, and the participants have no knowledge of what lies ahead except for a vague outline of the topics” (p. 235).

“After the fourth session a great sense of anticipation builds for the people attending the seminars. They had been told that during the next seminar they would learn about speaking in tongues and the following week would actually be baptized in the Spirit, and their lives would start over” (p. 241). Participants were told to give God “some raw material to work with by uttering a sound even if it seems to be meaningless, because the Spirit can give us the gift of tongues more easily if our mouths are moving and we are making sounds. The class is instructed not to analyze the sounds or worry that it is only baby talk” (p. 248). Furthermore, “As each person is prayed with, he or she is urged to yield to tongues. A team member might even whisper something spoken in tongues into a participant’s ear, interjecting an occasional ‘You can do it!’ Amid an atmosphere of Christian love that rules out the fear of feeling foolish the novice speaks out, ‘Da da dat.’ The team member excitedly says, ‘You got it,’ the person believes it, and suddenly the flood gates of gibberish are flung open” (p. 249).

Willmington (p. 197) noted how a “scientific analysis has been conducted by linguistic experts on tongue-speaking which was taped during various charismatic meetings” and here were the results:

- A high rate of repetition during the “tongue speaking.”
- The “tongues” were similar to the speaker’s language background.
- An excessive use of one or two vowels.
- The absence of any language structure.
- A noticeable delay between the “*tongue*” and the “*interpretation*.”
- Inconsistency in the interpretation of the **same** clauses and phrases.
- Those who interpreted used the *King James style* speech.

There are so many differences between the modern claims of tongue speaking and what we find in the Bible that only one of two conclusions is possible. The modern claims are either part of Satan’s deception (2 Cor. 11:14; 2 Thess. 2:9) or they are based on human physiology and psychology.

Many may not realize it, but heathen religions have had the kind of “tongue speaking experience” claimed in modern times. The “corybantic cult of the Thracian Dionysus” was a first century Greek religion and it was “known for its “frenzied, inarticulate, incoherent, ecstatic speech” (Turner, p. 459). True tongue speaking was a means to communicate with the unsaved.

12:10c: *and to another the interpretation of tongues:*

The Holy Spirit (verse 4) not only gave Christians the gift of tongues (the ability to speak in and understand languages they had never learned), He made available the *interpretation of tongues*. *Interpretation (hermeneia)* is very similar to our English word “*hermeneutics*” (i.e. interpretation). The word *interpretation* is found only here and 14:26, but the verb form of this word is used in Jn. 1:38, 42; 9:7; Heb. 7:2.

Interpretation of tongues describes the *translation of tongues*; this gift allowed Christians to know what was being said as well as translate a foreign language. This gift also implies that interpreters (translators) observed all the rules regarding grammar, syntax, and vocabulary when using this power. Those who had the gift of tongues were able to interpret the tongues they spoke, but some Christians had just the gift of interpretation.

It seems the Corinthians liked the gift of tongues so much they spoke in foreign languages even when that was not necessary. These Christians wanted to show off their ability to speak in languages they had never learned, even if other Christians in the assembly did not understand that tongue. Even if visitors were present and did not understand the foreign language being spoken (14:23), the Corinthians wanted to speak in a foreign language. While these things may be difficult for us to imagine, Paul leaves no doubt that these saints were selfish, unloving and unbelievably immature. Things were so bad Paul finally told them, “*Brethren, be not children in mind: yet in malice be ye babes, but in mind be men*” (1 Cor. 14:20). Compare, too, 1 Cor. 3:1-3.

In this section of the letter Paul told the Corinthians they could only speak in tongues (foreign languages) if these languages were interpreted (14:27). If someone would not interpret the language, the tongues could not be used (verse 28). This was a “decent and orderly” way to proceed (compare 1 Cor. 14:40), but the tongue speakers had other ideas. It seems at least some wanted to speak in a foreign language and then tell people what they said no matter if an interpreter was present or not. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that the next chapter talks about love and condemns boastful and proud behavior (13:4).

These Christians could have eliminated all the problems by speaking to fellow saints in the language that everyone understood, but they wanted to show off their gift of tongues. Paul reminded them that speaking in a foreign language without interpretation would prevent “edification” (14:2). If they spoke in a foreign language and then gave their own interpretation of what they said, that would have been ostentatious behavior. Why not present information in the language that everyone understood instead of trying to “show off” to other saints? Too, if tongue speakers spoke in a foreign language and then gave their own interpretation of what they had said, how would Christians know if the Christian was being truthful or accurate?

Just as a business may use an independent auditor to insure the integrity of financial data, so the Corinthians had to have a way to check up on the tongue speakers. Their “auditor” was a Christian who had the gift of interpretation and Paul said this gift was to be used. Those with the gift of interpretation were able to interpret what a tongue speaker was saying, or if a tongue speaker wanted to speak in a foreign language and then interpret what he said, an interpreter could verify that the tongue speaker had been accurate. This was so important that Paul seems to have told tongue speakers to pray about being more willing to serve as an interpreter than speak with tongues (14:13).

Although some think this latter part of verse 10 as well as 14:5, 13, 28 means some could speak in tongues but not interpret the language they spoke, this conclusion is incorrect. Those who received the gift of tongues also received the ability to interpret the same language(s). Today, when someone learns a foreign language, they can both speak that tongue (language) and interpret it. Such was also the case with the gift of tongues. If those who spoke in tongues did not understand what they were saying (and this is typically what Pentecostalism teaches), how could Christians really truly know they were “praying” in tongues (1 Cor. 14:14)? If a person does not know what he is saying, he might be cursing, apologizing, mumbling, or something else.

Anyone who has ever tried to teach the gospel to people in a foreign country understands the

difficulties associated with language barriers. Missionaries often need translators to communicate what they are teaching and then have translators interpret any response from the person(s) being taught. The gift of tongues eliminated the need for any type of third party help in teaching the gospel. Christians could supernaturally speak to others in whatever language was necessary and understand what foreigners said to them. As already noted, the Corinthians should have used the gift of tongues for evangelistic purposes, but they decided it was better to “show it off their gift in the assembly” when their gift was not necessary.

12:11: *but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will.*

The Holy Spirit was the source of the spiritual gifts (verses 4, 11a) and He divided them up as He chose (the Hebrew writer affirmed this same point in Heb. 2:4b). The word “*dividing*” (*diaireo*) means the Holy Spirit allotted “the gifts of the Spirit to the various members of the community according to His will” (Kittel, 1:184). Even though the apostles laid their hands on Christians to impart miraculous abilities (Acts 8:18; 19:1-5), the Holy Spirit determined who received what gifts.

Paul reinforced his point with the word “*will*” (*boulomai*). Brown (3:1018) defined *will* as “the freely willed decision of the Spirit.” Rather than give according to “the merits or wishes of men,” the Holy Spirit gave “according to his own will” (Hodge, First Corinthians, p. 253). Christians could wish and pray for various gifts (this point is discussed more fully below), but the Holy Spirit decided who received what abilities. In fact, *dividing* and *will* are both present tense verbs. Just as God the Father continued to energize the supernatural gifts (see verse 6), so the Holy Spirit (who is also a member of the Godhead) was continuously involved in determining which gifts were supposed to go to which Christians (readers may also wish to compare Eph. 4:8—Jesus also “gave gifts unto men”). Because the Spirit was the source of the supernatural gifts and was involved in determining who received what gifts, the Corinthians should not have boasted or complained about any of their supernatural abilities.

The word “*worketh*” (*energeo*)—a word very similar to our word *energy*—is a present tense verb. Power from the spiritual gifts came from the “energy” of the Holy Spirit, but not the Holy Spirit alone (see again verse 6 and Eph. 4:8). In fact, the word *worketh* is also applied to God the Father in verse 6. Basic definitions for *worketh* are “work, operate, accomplish.” In the New Testament *worketh* never describes any human power. It always refers to “some power which is beyond the power of man and the power of this world” (Barclay, New Testament Words, p. 77), though these powers are not always virtuous. Paul used this same word in Eph. 2:2 to describe a bad spirit that “works in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). Paul also used this term to describe an evil working in 2 Thess. 2:7.

Paul described the Holy Spirit’s distribution of the gifts once more at the end of this verse (“*to each one severally even as he will*”). While we often fail to give the right gifts to the right people, or we give the right gift to the wrong person, or we give the right gift to the right person at the wrong time, in the wrong way, in the wrong amount, or under the wrong circumstances, the Holy Spirit had a perfect understanding of which gifts needed to go to which Christians and He always perfectly distributed the supernatural abilities. This information also indicates the Holy Spirit dealt with each Christian on an individual basis.

While first century Christians could certainly seek certain gifts (12:31; 14:1, 39), God answered these requests just as He now answers prayer (“according to His will,” 1 Jn. 5:14). In the case of spiritual gifts, it seems the Holy Spirit paid attention to a Christian’s personal “characteristics, age, position, and other particular features of a person” (Lenski, First Corinthians, pp. 511-512). Paul’s point may also be related to Jn. 3:34 (many think this verse denotes various “measures” or “limits” on the gifts given by the Holy Spirit).

If a Christian never interacted with people who spoke a different language, the gift of tongues would have been of little use to him. If a person rarely had contact with the sick, the gift of healing would have been an inappropriate gift. It was very important for deity to determine who should receive what gifts so Christians could take the gospel to the unsaved and “confirm the word” (Mk. 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4).

12:12: *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are*

one body; so also is Christ.

Here Paul affirmed that every individual Christian is part of a single “body” (this point is also found in places like Gal. 3:28). Paul expressed this fact in two different ways: (1) *The body is one and has many members* and (2) *all the members of the body, although many, are one.*

There is a sense in which all faithful congregations compose the one body of Christ (Mt. 16:18), but here Paul referred to individual Christians and their local congregation. Everyone in a local congregation has become a Christian in exactly the same way (the process is described in verse 13) and this means the members in a local congregation should be unified (compare Rom. 15:6). Some think of unity as a luxury, but God views it as a necessity. Christians certainly have different functions and gifts (compare verses 8-10), but all are part of one body (verses 16-17). The Corinthians should have continually demonstrated this unity at the congregational potluck meals (11:18-21), the Lord’s Supper (10:16b, 17; 11:29) and the other aspects of worship (chapters 12-14), but they were failing in these things. Thus, Paul reminded them about how they became “one” with fellow saints in the next verse.

Introduction to 12:13:

Two key words (“all” and “one”) are used in both verses 12 and 13. In verse 12 Paul said “the body is one,” even though it “has many members.” In verse 13 Paul showed how these “many members” in a local congregation all share in some common experiences. The first part of verse 13 says, “*in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.*” This simply means that all become Christians by following the same exact steps. There is a specific plan to follow and, then, Jesus “adds people to His church” (see Acts 2:47, especially the KJV).

Unlike religious groups that “vote people in” or offer people the opportunity to “join” a church, the church of the New Testament (the one established by Jesus, Mt. 16:18), operates in a very unique way. When people are “obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7), Jesus, the head of the church, adds them to the church He purchased with His blood (Acts 2:41; 20:28). This obedience includes belief (Jn. 8:24), repentance (Acts 17:30), confessing Christ (1 Tim. 6:12), and being baptized into Jesus (Gal. 3:27) for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16). This baptism occurs in “water” (Jn. 3:3, 5; Acts 8:36) that is sufficient to fully immerse them (Rom. 6:4, “buried”). Upon being properly immersed a person receives the “forgiveness of sins” (Acts 2:38) and is added to the Lord’s church. The Bible never speaks of “joining” a church or being “voted” into it.

Although the preceding paragraph shows what God requires for salvation, this is not what most religious groups teach. In fact, as shown by the following chart, God’s plan is often quite different from what happens in denominational churches.

God says:				<i>Denominations say:</i>		
Mt. 28:18	Teach	Baptize	Teach	<i>Teach</i>	<i>Teach</i>	<i>Baptized</i>
Mark 16:16	Believe	Baptized	Saved	<i>Believe</i>	<i>Saved</i>	<i>Baptized</i>
Acts 2:38	Repent	Baptized	Forgiveness	<i>Repent</i>	<i>Forgiveness</i>	<i>Baptized</i>
Acts 22:16	Arise	Baptized	Forgiveness	<i>Arise</i>	<i>Forgiveness</i>	<i>Baptized</i>
Rom. 6:3-4	Die to sin	Baptized	New life	<i>Dead</i>	<i>New life</i>	<i>Baptized</i>
Gal. 3:27	As many	Baptized	Put on Christ	<i>As many</i>	<i>Put on Christ</i>	<i>Baptized</i>
1 Cor. 12:13	All	Baptized	One body	<i>All</i>	<i>One body</i>	<i>Baptized</i>

Col. 2:12-13	Die to sin	Baptized	New life	<i>Dead</i>	<i>New life</i>	<i>Baptized</i>
1 Pet. 3:21	Figure	Baptized	Saved	<i>Figure</i>	<i>Saved</i>	<i>Baptized</i>

The ASV, NKJV, NIV NASV and RSV all say “were baptized” in verse 13 (past tense) while the KJV uses the present tense (“are”). Since the Greek text uses the past tense, the ASV and the other referenced versions are preferred. Paul and the Corinthians were fully aware of baptism and its purpose, in part, because baptism was an explicit part of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15-16).

The word “*baptized*” (*baptizo*) meant to *immerse, dip, plunge, overwhelm*. In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) *baptizo* is found in 2 Kgs. 5:14 and translated “dipped.” This term is used quite often in the New Testament (it occurs in Matthew-John, Acts, Romans, First Corinthians, and Galatians). Among the verses that use this word are Mt. 28:19; Mk. 1:4; Mk. 10:38; Jn. 3:23; Acts 2:38, 41; 10:48; 16:15, 33; 22:16; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 15:29; Gal. 3:27.

Unlike most other New Testament words that are actually translated, *baptism* was *transliterated* (scholars took the Greek letters of the word and changed these letters into equivalent characters from the English alphabet). If *baptism* had been translated instead of transliterated, the places where it occurs would have words like dip, immerse, plunge, overwhelm, etc. Instead of John the Baptist, the Bible would say “John the immerser.” Colin Brown (1:145) noted how *baptizo* is “a technical term for baptism.” Since baptism described an immersion, Paul was able to refer to it with words such as “buried” in places like Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12. For a chart on Bible verses that discuss baptism and list the benefits associated with it, see the commentary on 6:11.

12:13a: *For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free;*

At the beginning of this verse Paul spoke of “*one Spirit*.” There is only one divine Spirit (Eph. 4:4) and this member of the Godhead is involved every time a person becomes a Christian. Peter affirmed this point in 1 Pet. 1:2 (“in sanctification of the Spirit”). The Old Testament prophets predicted that when the New Testament came, all would be “*taught of God*” (Jn. 6:45) and this is precisely Paul’s point here. People must *hear the word* given through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:16); in first century times this was often done by using spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit gave this information through things such as the “word of wisdom” and “word of knowledge” (verse 8). Now the completed New Testament provides us with this information.

When people “received the word” (Acts 2:41) and obeyed it, they became, as Paul described here, members of the “*one body*.” In New Testament times there were not different denominations and people were not part of various groups. There was only one church and this church worshipped in many different locations. This is still God’s plan for today. God still has only one church and it is necessary for us to be part of it (Mt. 15:13).

The Spirit’s work in conversion is spoken of several other times in the New Testament and is well illustrated with the following chart.

Text	Our renewing	Our washing	The blessing
1 Cor. 12:13	In one Spirit	Baptized	Put into one body
John 3:5	Born of Spirit	Born of water	Kingdom of God
1 Cor. 6:11	In the Spirit	Washed	Justified
Eph. 5:25-26	With the word	Washing of water	Cleansed and sanctified
Tit. 3:5	Renewing of Spirit	Washing of regeneration	He saved us
Heb. 10:22	Hearts sprinkled	Body washed	Evil conscience gone
1 Pet. 3:21	Good conscience toward God	Baptism	We are saved
Acts 2:37, 38, 41	Heard the word	Be baptized	Added to church

As shown in the preceding chart, “in one Spirit” means people “hear the Spirit’s word” (Acts 2:37, 38, 41; Eph. 5:25-26) and obey this information. This point is frequently found in other parts of the New Testament. The Holy Spirit produces faith in a person’s heart, but He does this by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). The Holy Spirit “begets” people, but Paul said this is done by the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15). The Holy Spirit quickens people, but this is done by the Scriptures (Ps. 119:50). People are “born of the Spirit,” but this birth comes by the “incorruptible word of God” (1 Pet. 1:22-23). Men are “saved by the Spirit,” but this salvation comes through the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-2). The Spirit cleanses the heart, but the Holy Spirit does this by the word (Jn. 15:3). Peter said the Spirit of God “purifies” men, and this is done by a person’s “obedience to the truth” (1 Pet. 1:22). Human beings are “sanctified by the Spirit,” but this sanctification comes through acceptance of the truth (2 Thess. 2:13), the word of God (Jn. 17:17). People are “led by the Spirit” and this leading comes through God’s word (Ps. 119:105). Christians “walk by the Spirit” when they obey the Spirit’s teaching (Phil. 3:16). All these things plus many more items are accomplished by the Holy Spirit and through His “sword” (the word of God, Eph. 6:17).

When it comes to conversion, people must believe as well as be baptized (Mk. 16:16). Hearing the word is essential (Rom. 10:14-15); no one will be saved unless he believes (Heb. 11:6). Repentance is necessary (Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38) as is confession (Acts 8:37). This is the point where many stop, but God says a person must also be buried (immersed) with Jesus in water baptism (Rom. 6:1-5) before receiving the forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16) and having the new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4). Since God is not a “respector of persons” (1 Pet. 1:17), all must obey this exact plan. What God requires of one person for salvation, He requires of all. There are not “different plans” to save people. If a person leaves out one of the preceding steps in the conversion process, people may call someone a Christian or regard him as a Christian, but God does not recognize him as a Christian.

As stated in the middle of this verse, God’s method of salvation is for “*Jews or Greeks*” and “*bond or free*.” In other words, all are saved in the same way. God does not have one plan of salvation for this person and another plan for that person. From the time of Acts 2 on, every person who has been saved has been rescued from sin in the exact same way (each followed the steps described in the preceding paragraph). Each has partaken of the same *bread of life* (Jn. 6:35), come to the same *everlasting water* (Jn. 4:13), and become part of the one *true vine* (Jn. 15:1). Those who have not followed the *one Spirit’s* teaching (God’s specific steps for salvation) are not part of God’s *one body*. Jesus predicted the fate of such people and the religious groups they chose to be with in Mt. 15:13: “*But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up.*” A person may be religious and confess Christ, but if he has obeyed a *different gospel* (Gal. 1:8-9), he will not be saved (Mt. 7:21).

As noted in the commentary on Rom. 6:3, many incorrectly believe they have been saved by “saying a sinner’s prayer” (something that is never mentioned in the Bible), or by “confessing Christ,” or by “accepting Jesus into the heart,” or by “praying with someone.” These ways are not from the “one Spirit” described in 1 Cor. 12:13 and God will not accept them or any other alternative methods of and for salvation. In fact, Jesus specifically warned that “many” will accept and use these kinds of false ways (Mt. 7:22a). Some will even claim to have performed miracles in His name (Mt. 7:22b), but these will be turned away because they did not follow the teaching of the “one Spirit” now described in the New Testament (Mt. 7:23). Notice from this verse that Jesus will say He was “never” associated with those who failed to follow Him in the way now described in the New Testament.

Fred Amick (Hearing for Eternity, Volume One, p. 92) correctly said: “When reduced to the lowest common denominator, the Bible is nothing more than a book of instructions to teach us how to achieve the mastery over this material world. God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ for one real purpose—to show us how to triumph over the flesh. Christianity is nothing more, or less, than a system of teaching and practice to save us from becoming the slaves of our own bodies.”

Amick also (p. 76) offered an excellent summary of the *one body* described in this verse: “It is that body of believers who have been immersed into Christ (Gal. 3:27); who wear only the name of Christ; who believe and teach only his doctrine; and who obey only his commands. ‘And he (Christ) is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church’ (Col. 1:18). In Eph. 5:23-24, we learn that Christ is the head of the church, the savior of the body, and the church is to be subject to him in every thing. The saved people are all in this body (Acts 2:47). The church of the Lord is that called out body of believers who are completely subject to Jesus Christ in everything they do and teach (Col. 3:17). They belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, body, soul, and spirit.” God calls people to leave the shackles of religious error and denominationalism and be just Christians—nothing more and nothing less.

Although some think they can be “in Christ” without being part of or in the one body described by Paul (i.e. the church), this is incorrect. Amick (p. 126) rightly noted that to “be in Christ is to be in His body (1 Corinthians 12:12-14). The only way to get into His body is to believe, repent and be baptized into Him (Galatians 3:26, 27). His body is nothing more than His church (Colossians 1:18, 24).” If we reject the one body, or we are not baptized into it, we are not in Christ and we have no spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3), one of which is salvation (2 Tim. 2:10).

12:13b: *and were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

Since the Holy Spirit has revealed the word of God (Jn. 16:13), and those who obey that word are brought together in “*one body*” (13a), Paul was able to say that all Christians have been “*made to drink of one Spirit.*” As shown in the following two paragraphs, *made to drink of one Spirit* refers to baptism into Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

Although some have understood the word *drink* (*potizo*) to describe the Lord’s Supper, this is incorrect. *Drinking* is expressed with an aorist tense verb (i.e. it does *not* refer to a repeated action). Since the Lord’s Supper is an on-going act (see the introductory comments on 1 Cor. 10:16 and the commentary on 11:20b) and *drink* is not an on-going act, the Lord’s Supper (Communion) is not being described.

In other parts of the New Testament, the word *drink* (*potizo*) describes watering animals (Lk. 13:15), the drink offered to Jesus while He was on the cross (Mt. 27:48), and an act of kindness (Mt. 25:35). Spicq (3:147) captured the right sense of the term for 1 Cor. 12:13: “We have all been watered by one Spirit.” That is, drinking of one Spirit “refers to baptism” (ibid). Paul was able to use this terminology because baptism “infuses new life and new power” (ibid) into people. Baptism is one of the “seven ones” mentioned in Eph. 4:4-5 and this act, just like one body, the one Spirit, the one hope, the one Lord, the one faith, and the one Father listed in Eph. 4, creates a common bond among all the saved from the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 onward.

As shown by the preceding chart on 13a, baptism is not a “way to join the church,” a “good thing to do,” or a “very important act.” Baptism is the means by which we enter into Christ (Gal. 3:27), the final

act before our sins are forgiven (Acts 2:38), and the way we become part of the “one body” (compare Rom. 6:1-5 and this author’s comments on Rom. 6:3-7). Because all people are now saved in the same manner, Jude said Christians have a “common salvation” (Jude 3). Peter expressed a similar point when he said the saved are “begotten again through the word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23). We either follow the specific plan for salvation God has given in His word (and this includes baptism, Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:20-21) or we do not. There is no middle ground.

While the method of communicating the gospel has certainly changed (in the first century supernatural gifts were used to communicate the gospel since the New Testament had not been completed), the steps a person must follow to become a Christian are always the same. This plan is part of the “one faith” (Eph. 4:5), the faith “once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), the doctrine that is “learned” (Rom. 16:17), “sound” teaching (1 Tim. 1:10) and the “good doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:6). Anyone who tries to deviate from this plan (and one deviation is saying baptism is not required) embraces a *different gospel* (Gal. 1:8-9).

We may not obey these steps at the same time as others: Some may be baptized at “midnight” (Acts 16:25, 33) and others may be baptized during the daytime (Acts 2:15, 38, 41). Some may be baptized in front of many witnesses and others may be baptized in a solitary setting. A baptism may take place in a river, pool, or pond. Circumstances about a person’s conversion may vary, but God’s plan for conversion is always the same.

Holy Spirit baptism or water baptism?

The second point involves the *type* of baptism described in verse 13. Members of the charismatic movement have often used verse 13 to claim they have been “baptized in the Holy Spirit” or the *baptism* in 1 Cor. 12:13 is “Holy Spirit baptism.”

As Eph. 4:5 clearly says and the following chart demonstrates, there is now only “one” baptism available to people. If this one baptism is Holy Spirit baptism, there is no place for water baptism in Christianity. If the one baptism is water baptism, Holy Spirit is no longer available.

Acts 2, the day of Pentecost	The conversion of Cornelius and other Gentiles (Acts 10-11)	Paul's letter to the Ephesians
Time: A.D. 33	Time: A.D. 41	Time: A.D. 62
Two baptisms? Yes	Two baptisms? Some say yes	Two baptisms? No
Verses: Acts 1:5; 2:1-4, 38	Verses: Acts 10:47-48; 11:15-16	Verse: Eph. 4:5
THE BAPTISM(S): Water and Holy Spirit baptism	THE BAPTISM(S): Water baptism and a "pouring forth" of the Holy Spirit	Is the "one baptism" water baptism or Holy Spirit baptism?

Holy Spirit baptism was specifically promised and specifically fulfilled (Acts 1:5-8), but about 30 years after it was promised and fulfilled Paul said only *one baptism* was available (Eph. 4:5). We also find this point demonstrated in the Great Commission. There was a "baptism," but it was not Holy Spirit baptism:

John 3:5:	Born of Spirit	Born of Water	Kingdom of God
Matthew 28:19-20:	Make a disciple	Baptize	Further teach, verse 20
Mark 16:16:	Believeth	Baptized	Saved

Holy Spirit baptism was a promise to the apostles (Acts 1:2, 5, 8), but not all Christians. The apostles were immersed in the Holy Spirit so they could have the powers to reveal and confirm God's word (see the commentary on 1 Cor. 13:8-10), as well as give supernatural gifts to Christians (Acts 8:18).

Did Cornelius' household receive Holy Spirit baptism?

Many think the household of Cornelius (Acts 10-11) received Holy Spirit baptism, but the evidence for this conclusion is doubtful at best. Luke said the Holy Spirit "*fell*" on these Gentiles (Acts 10:44) and the "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" was "*poured out*" on them (Acts 10:45). We know the Holy Spirit allowed Cornelius and those with him to speak in "tongues" (Acts 10:46), but nothing is recorded about their being baptized in the Holy Spirit. The closest Luke comes to describing Holy Spirit baptism is found in Acts 11:15. Here he said the Holy Spirit fell on the household of Cornelius "*as*" it came on the apostles at the "*beginning*" (i.e. Acts 2:1-4).

Peter remembered Jesus' promise about Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 11:16), but he specifically said the promise of Spirit baptism was limited to the apostle (notice the pronoun "*you*" in Acts 11:16). Peter gave no indication that Holy Spirit baptism was to ever extend beyond the apostles. Although the conversion of Cornelius and other Gentiles is recorded twice in the book of Acts (chapters 10-11), neither account says these Gentiles were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Even if it could be proven that Cornelius and those with him were baptized in the Holy Spirit, this fact would be irrelevant. As demonstrated by the preceding chart, when Paul wrote the Ephesian letter about 20 years after the conversion of Cornelius, there was only "one baptism." Today there is still only one baptism.

God allowed the Holy Spirit to come to Cornelius and others for a sign (proof) that these Gentiles could become Christians (Acts 10:47) and be welcome in the church (compare Acts 10:28; 45-48; 11:17-18).

Was Jesus' promise about Holy Spirit baptism limited in scope?

The short and correct answer to this question is “yes.” In Jn. 15:26-27 we read, “*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*” Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit upon those who had been with Him **from the beginning** (today no one can meet this qualification). Jesus then repeated this promise in Lk. 24:49 and Acts 1:2, 4, 5, 8. It is true that Paul later received the power of Holy Spirit baptism and he was not with Jesus from the beginning, but he was a servant “born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8).

How does water baptism differ from Holy Spirit baptism?

Water baptism	Verses	Spirit baptism	Verses
For all people	Mt. 28:19	For the apostles	Acts 1:1-5
Is commanded	Acts 10:48	Was promised	Acts 1:4-5
Performed by men	Acts 8:35-38	Done by Jesus	Acts 1:5; Jn. 16:7
Condition of salvation	Mk. 16:16	For the saved	Acts 2:4, 14, 32
People didn't wait for it	Acts 16:33	Told to wait for it	Acts 1:4
Name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit	Mt. 28:18-19	Done by the Lord	Acts 1:5
An act of faith	Col. 2:12	Done for faithful	Acts 1:4-5
A burial and resurrection	Rom. 6:3-5	Done for the faithful	Acts 1:4-5
Puts us into Christ	Gal. 3:27	For people in Christ	Acts 1:4-5
Continue to end of time	Mt. 28:18-20	Limited to the first century	1 Cor. 13:8-10
Effects are invisible	Rom. 6:3	Audible and visible	Acts 2:2-4
There is now only <i>one baptism</i> (Eph. 4:5). This is water baptism.		Holy Spirit baptism ended in the first century.	

Important questions and answers about Holy Spirit baptism:

Who received it?	Jesus' chosen apostles	Lk. 24:33 + Lk. 24:48; Acts 1:2-8; 1 Cor. 15:8
What was it?	An immersion in the Spirit's power	Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:5; 2:4
Where was it given?	Jerusalem	Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:4, 8; Isa. 2:3
When was it given?	Shortly after Jesus' resurrection	Mk. 9:1; Acts 1:5; 2:1-20
Why was it given?	To bear witness to resurrection and the gospel	Lk. 24:46-49; Mk. 16:15-20

Common but false claims about the Holy Spirit:

People often make magnificent but false claims concerning the Holy Spirit. This author has heard some very bizarre claims, two of which involved resurrecting animals. One of these cases involved a dead chicken. The other case involved a cat that was allegedly resurrected by someone who claimed to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. This author investigated the cat claim by phone and learned that the animal had not actually died, although this is what had been publicly claimed. The “healer” said the cat was “almost dead” after it had been hit by a car and after “several weeks” the animal returned to good health.

Repeated investigations of charismatic claims have proven the claims to be mighty but the “deeds” to be minor or fake. If those now living really had the power of the Holy Spirit, people with cancer would be instantly cured, deformed body parts would be instantly healed, and the dead would be raised. These things do not happen today because the Holy Spirit now works through the completed word of God.

20 reasons to reject the modern claims of Pentecostalism (this information is adopted from James D. Bales and his book *The Master Respondent*, pp. 15-16).

1. The miracles of the New Testament were instantaneous (Mt. 8:15; 20:34; Acts 8:7-8; 9:34). Even passages such as Mk. 8:23-25, Lk. 17:12-14, and Jn. 4:50-52 are in no way similar to the “partial” healings or the “You will eventually get better” claims made today.

2. Faith was not always required on the part of the person who was healed (Jn. 11:39; Acts 16:18).

3. Those who received a miracle in New Testament times were completely cured and there were no failures (Mt. 4:24; 8:16; 9:35; 14:34-36; Lk. 4:40; 9:11).

4. Problems with body organs were cured (Lk. 22:49-51).

5. The healings were done in public (Mt. 12:9-14; Acts 3:16; 4:21; 9:32-42).

6. The healings were so powerful that enemies of the gospel acknowledged the miracles (Mt. 12:13-14; Acts 4:16).

7. The miracles glorified the Father and Son (Mt. 15:31; Mk. 2:12; Acts 4:21); the miracles were not a means to make money for the church or its preachers (Mt. 10:8-10; Acts 3:6). The Acts 3:6 reference is especially intriguing when compared with the modern Pentecostal movement. Instead of Peter and John asking for a “contribution to their ministry” (the technique employed by charismatic groups), *the sick person asked for a donation!* Unlike the modern charismatic movement, the apostles lived by the principle in Mt. 10:8-10.

8. Bible miracles were used to support truth, not religious error (Heb. 2:3-4). The word of God was “spoken” and then “confirmed” (Mk. 16:20) by signs.

9. Miracles were not used to perpetuate any religious group except the one church built by Jesus (Mt. 16:18). Today the so-called miracles are used to support many different groups (compare 1 Cor. 14:33).

10. Sick people did not need to be physically present to be healed (Mt. 8:5-9, 13).

11. Miracles were accomplished in spite of objections (Mk. 5:6-10; Acts 13:8-12).

12. Miracles were performed because *others* had faith (Mt. 8:8; Jn. 4:46-53).

13. There were no preliminary investigations to weed out the “hard cases.”

14. Jesus and those endowed with the Holy Spirit did not fail to heal someone and then insult the sick person by saying, “You lack faith. If only you had the faith to be healed, you would have been cured.” The only case of *failure* (and this was before the baptism of the Spirit) was *blamed on the healers* (Mt. 17:14-21). After Pentecost and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the apostles never failed to heal the sick.

15. Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever said unbelievers interfered with their power to perform miracles. Some think Jesus was hindered by the unbelief of others (Mt. 13:58), but the Lord never faced a “power problem.” Some did not believe in Him and would, therefore, not come to Him for healing. Stated another way, Jesus sometimes faced an “attendance problem.” Since Jesus was God in the flesh (Jn. 1:1, 14), He had the power to heal anyone who was sick and He never failed.

16. Jesus and the apostles did not fail and then excuse their failures by saying, “This sickness must be God’s will.” Those with the gift of healing never used excuses because miracles were designed to confirm the word (Heb. 2:3 and Mk. 16:17-20).

17. Jesus and the apostles never announced a “special healing service.” Healing was a natural part of first century church because Christianity was new and this faith had to be confirmed (Mk. 16:15-20; Acts 5:16). Free medical miracles were a wonderful and powerful way to spread the news about Christianity and convince people the gospel is true.

18. New Testament miracles never required the type of “special atmosphere” now used by charismatic groups (compare Acts 5:15).

19. Jesus sometimes discouraged publicity (Mt. 9:30; Lk. 5:14), but this is rarely done by those who claim supernatural powers.

20. There were times when God miraculously protected His people (Acts 12:7-11) and some think this supernatural protection is also described in Mk. 16:17-20. The promise in Mk. 16:18 may indicate that Christians were sometimes intentionally poisoned, but toxins and deadly snakes did not harm them. Just as Daniel was protected from lions and this made a great impression on the king (Dan. 6:19-23), similar protection may have been afforded to the first century Christians. Today these protections, just like the other miracles, are gone. Proof that they are gone is found in the fact that those who profess to follow Christ but drink poison get sick or die. Many charismatic snake handlers have been bitten and died.

The apostle John (1 Jn 4:1) said, “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (compare, too, 1 Thess. 5:21). If people believed and studied the Scriptures, they would soon realize that the modern Pentecostal claims are not only false, but the claims are outrageous and border on blasphemy (would the Holy Spirit need several weeks to heal a cat?) Many are often led astray by Pentecostal claims because they do not know and study the Bible.

12:14: *For the body is not one member, but many.*

Four distinct points are found in verses 14-18: (1) The body is made up of several different parts and these various parts do many different things (verse 14). (2) Every body part is important (verses 15-16). (3) Every part must operate as intended if the body is to properly function (verse 17). (4) The design of the body has been orchestrated by God (verse 18).

Just as all the physical parts of the human body are necessary to have a fully and properly functioning body, so the Corinthian church “needed all its parts.” In the preceding verses Paul said the Godhead gave

and energized the first century supernatural gifts (verses 1, 4-6). He also noted how deity gave many different gifts to Christians (verses 7-10) and every gift was important, though some abilities, such as tongues, may have been more attention getting. Christians who had gifts such as the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, or the gift of healing were just as important as prophets and tongue speakers. This point was so important it is discussed in more detail in the following verses.

Someone has compared Paul's point to shop tools that had a meeting where "Brother Hammer was the meeting chair person. The other tools asked him to leave because he, being the hammer, was too noisy. Before the hammer left he said, 'If I am to leave this carpenter's shop, Brother Gimlet must go too. He is so insignificant that he makes very little impression.' Little Brother Gimlet arose and said, 'All right, but Brother Screw must go as well because you must turn him around and around again and again to get him anywhere.' Brother Screw then said, 'If you wish, I will go, but Brother Plane must leave as well. All his work is on the surface; there is no depth to it.' To this Brother Plane replied, 'Well, Brother Rule will have to withdraw if I do, for he is always measuring other folks as though he were the only one who is right.' Brother Rule then complained against Brother Sandpaper and said, 'I just don't care; he is rougher than he ought to be and he is always rubbing people the wrong way.'

In the midst of the discussion, the Master Carpenter from Nazareth walked into the shop. He put on His apron and went to His bench to make a pulpit. He employed the screw, the gimlet, the sandpaper, the saw, the hammer, the plane, and all the other tools. After the day's work was over and the pulpit was finished, Brother Saw arose and said, 'Brethren, I perceive that all of us are laborers together with God.' The Carpenter used every tool in His shop, just as He uses every tool in His church. Every church member has value and we need to admit and recognize that value if we wish to properly love and serve God.

12:15-16: *If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body.*

These verses are really a continuation of the information in verse 14. Apparently some of the Christians at Corinth used their spiritual gifts in such a way where other Christians felt inferior or unnecessary. Paul warned the Corinthians against being jealous or envious about the spiritual gifts possessed by others. Just as every part of our physical body is important, so every spiritual gift had an important part in the first century church and every Christian should have been grateful for what he had. The Corinthians should have also remembered that the Holy Spirit had determined who received what gifts (verse 11). If these Christians were not satisfied with their spiritual gifts, they implied the Holy Spirit had made a mistake or had been unfair with them.

Verse 15 says the human "foot" (*pous*) is never jealous or envious of the "hand" (*cheir*). Neither does a foot say it is "not of the body" because it has a different role than some other part (our feet allow us to walk, run, and move things). Our physical "ears" (*ous*), verse 16, may not have the camera like qualities of the "eye" (*ophthalmos*), but our body needs them if it is to function properly. Our body parts do not all carry out the same tasks, but this in no way means some parts are unimportant or unnecessary.

Today Christians can forget that "all parts of the body are still necessary" and this often results in envying the talents or skills possessed by others. Rather than wish we had what others possess, we need to take and use what God has given to us. God warns us about envy in many different places and ways. Joseph was put into a pit because of envy (Acts 7:9), Jesus was delivered up because of envy (Mt. 27:18), and Paul specifically spoke of this sin in Gal. 5:26. To ensure the Corinthians rejected the "greener grass syndrome" (*you have a gift that I want because yours is better than mine*), Paul spoke more about this subject in verse 17.

Additional thoughts on the foot, hand and ear illustration:

The Bible associates man's feet with worship (Mt. 28:9; Rev. 1:17), scorn (Mk. 6:11), self-discipline

(Mk. 9:45), showing hospitality (Lk. 7:38; 1 Tim. 5:10), acceptance and rejection (Lk. 15:22; Acts 13:51), subjection (Heb. 2:8), and spiritual victory (Rom. 16:20; Eph. 1:22). In the book of Proverbs we are warned that feet can “run to mischief” (Prov. 6:18) and God “hates” this activity (Prov. 6:16). Although our feet are not directly connected to our hands, they *are* part of the human body and they have been called “the most prominent members of the body” because they represent “the action or attitude of the individual” (CBL, GED, 5:274).

Some have wondered why Paul compared the feet to the hands instead of comparing our feet to our eyes. The answer to this question might be found in the arrangement of the human body. When we envy or look up to someone, we usually look at someone who is slightly above us. Instead of wishing to be the President, most envy someone who is somewhat related to their day-to-day life. Thus, Paul may have selected the hands because, when compared to our eyes and ears, they are closer to our feet. Others think Paul compared the feet to hands (verse 15) because there is a significant difference in the dexterity of these two body parts. Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 522) noted how the “foot and the hand are bodily extremities, the ear and the eye are two of the bodily senses. There is a certain relation between the two in each pair and thus a certain fitness in placing together the two in each pair. Moreover, *πούς* (foot, BP) and *οὖς* (ear, BP) are similar even in sound and may thus be paired.”

For us, the foot illustration is an on-going reminder of how we may not be the preacher, an elder, deacon, or a Bible class teacher in a local congregation, but we are nevertheless very important. Each faithful member in a local congregation is essential, even though he may not do some or all the things done by others. There is no reason for a deacon to complain he is not an elder or for a teacher to be unhappy that he is not the preacher. Those who mow the lawn, clean the building, pay the bills, take out the trash, keep a supply closet stocked, plow snow, etc. should never feel their work is unimportant or unnecessary. This point also applies to activities that require a group of people (a group of women who help with bridal showers or funerals is just as valuable as a group of men who help lead a worship service). Those who help teach the Bible using a correspondence course or teach in a prison ministry are just as important as preachers who conduct personal Bible studies. When people are not willing to carry out needed tasks in a local congregation—tasks that may not seem to be very glamorous—a congregation will not be what God wants it to be.

12:17: *If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?*

Here Paul described a body where all the parts perform the same function. If our *ears* (verse 16) were just like our “*eyes*,” or our ears could operate as our eyes do, what would our body be like? If every part of our body were like the eye, we would have a monstrosity; it would be impossible for our body to carry out all its various functions. Even though the eyes are the “highest means of contact with the world around” (Brown, 3:512), and they are certainly a spectacular part of the body, if our body was nothing but an eye, we would not be satisfied with our body. We need each body part, though some parts are not as large or prominent as others. This illustration should have encouraged the Corinthians who felt inferior to others because they did not receive a gift from the Holy Spirit or because their gift did not seem as spectacular as that given to others (verses 14-16). Today Christians must also realize that every child of God is still important, though each person may not seem as prominent as others. We need to realize that each Christian is a “living stone” that is perfectly placed in God’s “spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2:5).

In addition to mentioning the “eye,” Paul also spoke of man’s “*hearing*” (*akoe*) and “*smelling*” (*osphresis*). As human beings we treasure the ability to *see*, *hear* and *smell*. In fact, people are so desirous of a body that has all its parts and is operating correctly that we will undergo surgery and pay a lot of money to correct defects (Mk. 5:26). In cases where part of our body is damaged or destroyed (body parts may be broken, sprained, amputated, or there is an outright loss of something like hearing or sight), our whole body suffers. This point is also true with and for the church. A congregation will never be all that it can or should be without all its various parts (members).

Although Christians are to be content with their respective role in the church, many are not satisfied

with their position. Some see a fellow saint serving as a song leader, a Bible class teacher, a deacon, elder, etc., and they “want to do the same thing.” In some cases this is possible. In other cases it is not possible. We must survey our talents, find the areas wherein we are able to serve, and then work in these ways. We should seek to discover our existing and potential talents and use them to the fullest and never envy the abilities of others. When we find people who have skills we do not have, we should rejoice with them because they can help advance God’s kingdom in ways we cannot. John the Baptist understood this role; even though part of his role involved a “decrease” (Jn. 3:29-30), he joyfully accepted his duties and fulfilled them.

God has an important place for all who want to become Christians, but some prefer to be like the tonsils, appendix and gall bladder (these parts can be removed and people hardly know they are gone). In a similar way, some who profess to follow Christ largely go unnoticed until there is a “flare-up” (a complaint). Every Christian would do well to ask if he is most like an “eye, ear, hand, foot, nose, or *the tonsils, appendix and gall bladder*.”

12:18: *But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him.*

Not only are all the parts of a body necessary (verse 17), God *set each member in the body (church) in a way that pleased Him*. The word “*set*” (*tithemi*) means God “*appoints* the members of the congregation just as he did the apostle (1 Cor. 12:18, 28; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11)” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:356). God decided who received what gifts and what functions were best for these Christians (compare verses 11, 28 and 7:17).

The word *set* in this verse applies to Christians in the church, but it also implies that man is not a product of evolution. The human body appears and works as it does because God *set* all the parts in the proper place at the time of creation (Gen. 1:26-27 and see the comments on 15:38). As Vine (2:89) noted, “the tenses of both verbs are the aorist or point tenses and should be translated ‘set’ and ‘it pleased’ (instead of the perfect tenses, ‘hath set’ and ‘it hath pleased’) and this marks the formation of the human body in all its parts as a creative act at a single point of time, and contradicts the evolutionary theory of a gradual development from infinitesimal microcosms.”

Set is not only used in this verse, it is also found in verse 28. God also *set* people in the first century church and verse 28 implies that God is still *setting* people in the church. When describing bishops (local leaders in a congregation) Paul said the Holy Spirit had “appointed” these men (Acts 20:28). This author believes this is still done and it is accomplished in the same way God accomplishes other tasks. Church leaders are *set by God* when Christians follow the directions found in the Bible. Obedience to God’s word and divine providence allows God to put the right people in the right places in the church, though men sometimes use their free-will to interfere with God’s exact plans.

God also *set* people in various capacities during the Old Testament era. Moses was raised up to deliver the Hebrews from slavery. God raised up Gideon to deal with the Midianites. When a king was needed to replace Saul, God raised up David. Paul was a leader in the first century church and he is described as a “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15).

The word *set* was a way of telling the Corinthians they needed to be satisfied with their role in the church. Today, whatever our role in the church is, we must accept it and be satisfied with it because it is also from God. Rather than think of our role as “big or small,” “very public” or “very private,” we should think of it as being “from God” and work as hard as we can with the abilities we have. Too often Christians want the skills and abilities possessed by others (compare verses 15-17).

The word “*members (melos)*” is used more than 30 times in the New Testament and many of those places are in this chapter (verses 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 27). Paul also used the word “*pleased*” (*thelo*); God set up the church in a way that *pleased* Him. Thayer (p. 285) defined *pleased* as “*to be resolved or determined, to purpose.*” Contrary to what some think and claim, God has organized His church in a specific way—the way He believes is best. Just as the human body was perfectly designed, so the New Testament church has been perfectly designed. Today people either abide by God’s divine design of and for the church or they do not. Rejecting God’s plan for the church (its work, worship and mission),

even if the deviations are small, is an example of accepting earthly, sensual and devilish wisdom (Jas. 3:15) and this makes worshippers an enemy of God (Jas. 4:4). Many may “stumble at God’s word (1 Pet. 2:8), but people with true faith accept and follow it because they know God’s ways are best.

12:19-20: *And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now they are many members, but one body.*

In verse 19 Paul asked, “What if the body were all one part (one organ)? What if our body was nothing but a mouth, a set of ears, or two feet?” If this were true (the human body did not have multiple organs and each organ did not carry out its respective function), the body would not survive. An unorganized body or a body without properly functioning parts is sick or dead. Physical bodies require many different parts to live and properly function. In fact, we are amazed at how “fearfully and wonderfully” man is made (Ps. 139:14). Whether we look at our skin, the skeletal system, our cells, the muscular system, the nervous, digestive and circulatory systems, the respiratory, endocrine and excretory systems, the sensory organs or the brain, we find that we have many different parts, all these parts are necessary, and these parts all work together to form one harmonious unit.

What is true of the human body (verse 19) is also true of God’s spiritual body (the church). The church also has many different parts (functions) and the various parts are “just right” for what the church needs. Thus, in verse 20 Paul concluded, “*there are many members, yet one body.*” This means the church needs the various members specified by God doing their various jobs (compare the word “*set*” in verse 18). Also, there is no basis for any division or unhappiness among Christians because we do not have the same skills as other believers, or because we do not carry out the same tasks done by others. If the first century church had nothing but apostles, how could it have properly functioned? If all its members had been preachers, work such as that described in Acts 6:1-3 would have never been done.

Today it is still imperative for Christians to realize that not everyone in the church can or should do all the same things. As noted in the commentary on the first part of 1 Cor. 11, women have not been given the role of preaching in an assembly where men are present (compare 1 Tim. 2:11-12). Single men are not qualified to be elders (1 Tim. 3:1-2). New converts are not entitled to be elders (1 Tim. 3:6). Deacons must be married men with children (1 Tim. 3:12) and must be “proven” before they serve (1 Tim. 3:10). God has different roles in the church and when these various roles are fulfilled, the end result is completeness. If people are not willing to fulfill a needed role, even though it may not seem sensational, the body will be incomplete (verse 17). Verse 20 contains the summary of Paul’s discussion and it reminds us that a “Christian should not think that he is independent, self-sufficient, or better than others” (Gromacki, p. 156).

Introduction to 12:21-22:

In verses 15-20 Paul noted how things like the feet and hands are essential to the body, but these parts are less prominent than our eyes and head (the hand can only reach what is near, but the eye can see things far away). Not every part is suitable for “long range work” and not every part is as prominent as other parts; however, the body needs all its various parts to properly function. In verses 21-24 Paul continued to explain that even though some body parts might be classified as more prominent, this does not make them “superior” (i.e. the more prominent organs have no right to despise or look down on the less outstanding parts). Whether a body part seems big or small, whether it is clothed or unclothed, and whether it is on the inside or outside of the body, each part is essential for a properly functioning body. Even if our body has a “dominant hand” or a “dominant eye,” this does not mean our non-dominant part is unimportant.

It is almost as if man’s body parts appreciate each other, respect each other, and the various parts actively seek to work together. A similar truth is found in the spiritual realm: The church needs all its members doing a wide variety of tasks so God’s spiritual body is complete. Christians who seem to have a prominent role in the church have no basis for boasting and Christians who have a less prominent role

have no basis for feeling unimportant or insignificant. Applied to the situation at Corinth, those who had “greater gifts” had contempt for those who had “lesser gifts” and this was wrong.

12:21-22: *And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary:*

The “eyes” (*ophthalmos*) are a very important organ and we greatly value the functions they perform, but eyesight alone is not enough for a properly functioning body. Moreover, even though the eyes are physically located “above” the hands, it would be wrong for them to say to our hands, “Since we give sight to this body, and we are positioned above you in the body, you, the hands, are useless. Since the body has us, it does not need you.” The eyes certainly provide sight to the body, but the hands allow us to grip, pick up, and manipulate what the eyes see.

The word “need” (*chreia*) is used twice in verse 21 and this term described a very strong need (i.e. necessity). Paul pictured a situation where the eyes continually denied they needed the hands. Also, “have” (*echo*) in verse 21 is a present tense verb. Man can live without his hands and even his eyesight, but his body will not function as it should.

In 21b Paul said the head could not deny the necessity of the feet. Our *head* is an essential component for our body to properly function, but only having a head is not enough for a fully functioning body (the feet are also crucial). The need for having all our body parts is so great medical science has spent much time researching and developing “replacement parts” for God’s “original equipment.”

Verse 22 makes the point even more emphatically by saying the “weak parts” (feeble) of the body are also absolutely necessary. The beginning of this verse says, “*much rather*” (“*much more*,” KJV). The NIV says, “*On the contrary*.” Paul also used the word “*necessary*” in 22b (*anankaaios*), a term that meant “the *indispensable* members of the body” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 1:79). Rather than say that some parts of the body “will be necessary” (future tense) or “were necessary” (past tense), the end of verse 22 says even the *weak* parts of the body “*are*” (present tense) absolutely required. In way after way Paul reminded the Corinthians that a body must have all its respective parts to properly operate.

It is easy to see that the human body and the church need all their various parts to properly function, but the Corinthians had failed to recognize these truths, especially in the realm of spiritual gifts. God gave a variety of gifts to first century Christians and every gift had a special use. There were no “*unnecessary*” gifts. Until the Corinthians acknowledged and applied this fact, many of their congregational problems would not be overcome. Today, congregations will have serious problems if they do not recognize the value and necessity of every member and task in the church.

At the end of verse 22 Paul used the word “*feeble*.” This term (*asthenes*) described “weakness” (it is also found in places such as 8:7, 9, 10; 11:30; 12:22, etc.). Rather than say some parts of the body *are* feeble, Paul said some parts “*seem*” feeble. *Seem* is the same term translated “think” in verse 23. In the next verse Paul said some *think* certain parts of the body are “less honorable” than other parts. Here in verse 22, Paul said some “think” certain members of the church are weak (insignificant). Even though some members may seem to be unnecessary, this is not God’s view of things.

If we see an aged Christian confined to a nursing home, that brother or sister may *seem* to be a feeble and unnecessary part of the body. A person who can rarely attend because of his work schedule may *seem* to be an unnecessary part of the local congregation. Others who are very young, very old, very sick, very poor, or poorly educated may *seem* to be of little use or value in a local congregation. God says each person is valuable. Even those who *seem feeble* “are necessary.”

The church has “many members” (verse 20). While some Christians might like to have all the members in the place where they worship be “strong” or be “just like them,” this is not realistic. Christians need to be very careful about any type thinking that says, “We do not need this person in the place where we worship because he is unimportant” or “We can get along fine without them.” While some Christians are like the tonsils, appendix and gall bladder (see the comments on 12:17) and they may not be missed very much if they left, God has an important place for all who want to serve Him in spirit

and truth (readers may wish to refer back to the commentary just prior to 12:17). The human body and the church can manage without some of their parts (the human body may be minus a leg, arm or eye and still survive just as a congregation can get along without a preacher, elders or deacons), but both bodies are impaired if they do not have all God intended for them to have.

Rather than turn away from Christians who seem weak, God wants His people to “build up” the weak (1 Thess. 5:11, 14) instead of thinking, “We have no need of you” (1 Cor. 12:21). The need to act in this way may not seem to be as great or necessary in large congregations, but Paul’s point is not based on a congregation’s size. Babies and adults need all their body parts, just as large and small congregations need all their respective parts. Gromacki (p. 156) noted how the “little toe may seem to be insignificant, but try to walk or run without one. The liver and kidneys are not as impressive as brown eyes or bulging biceps, but try to live without them!” We really do need all the members in a local congregation.

Verse 22 speaks of the *more feeble* parts of the body, but there are also the “less honorable” body parts (23a) as well as the “uncomely parts” (23b) and these topics are discussed next.

12:23: *and those (parts) of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely (parts) have more abundant comeliness;*

If this verse is carefully read, it is immediately apparent that God did not say “some parts of the body are *less honorable*.” Paul said some “*think*” (*dokeo*) certain parts are *less honorable*. *Think* is a present tense verb and it may be defined as: “*to be of opinion, think, suppose*” (Thayer, p. 154). Paul knew some *think* certain body parts and (or) certain members of the church are not as honorable as other parts, but this is not God’s view of the human body or His spiritual body, the church.

The word translated “*less honorable*” (*atimos*) is found only here; 4:10; Mt. 13:57; Mk. 6:4. Our “less honorable” body parts include things like the hips, knees, shoulders and the “trunk” of our body. We could even include the eyebrows. Paul said we “bestow more abundant honor” on these parts (these parts may be concealed with clothing to make them more attractive. Makeup may be used on eyebrows and eyelashes).

If a person has ugly feet, he (or she) may cover them with beautiful shoes—the ugliness of the feet is made attractive with a covering. In fact, nice shoes actually draw attention to a body part that might otherwise be despised. Our arms and legs may not seem as inspiring as the human eye, but when these parts receive “special attention” by being clothed, or rings are placed on the fingers and toes, these “less honorable parts” receive “more abundant honor.” God intended for some parts of the body to be covered and for other parts, such as the eyes, nose, mouth and teeth, to be uncovered. Some parts have “natural beauty,” but other parts receive some type of “decoration,” such as jewelry and clothing. When “less honorable” parts are covered, they are *equal* to the *honorable* parts or they become *more honorable* (23b).

The word translated “*bestow*” (*peritithemi*) is used in Mt. 27:28 to describe putting on a garment. In Mk. 15:17 it describes the putting on of a crown (“*put*”). Mark also used it to describe a hedge (Mk. 12:1, “*about*”). Here it describes the putting on of clothing; that is, clothing is supposed to be put on the “less honorable” parts of the body.” Since *bestow* is a present tense verb, right thinking people *continually* put on clothing. The time for public nudity or scantily covered bodies (Gen. 2:25) is gone. Clothing is especially important for “*our uncomely parts*.”

After speaking of “feeble” body parts (verse 22) and “less honorable” body parts (verse 23a), Paul turned to the *uncomely* parts of the body (verse 23b). This final description of the human body refers to man’s private (intimate) parts. Brown (2:51) described these parts as those which “carry out the lowest services.” Paul used very delicate wording to describe man’s sexual organs. *Uncomeliness* (*aschemon*) occurs only here in the New Testament, and as already stated in this paragraph, it has a sexual connotation. Gingrich and Danker (p. 119) defined *uncomeliness* as “shame, unpresentable, indecent.”

Uncomeliness does not mean some parts of the body are shameful, for that would mean God did not give man a perfect body. Paul meant there is a “season for everything” (Eccl. 3:1). There are appropriate and inappropriate times to bare certain parts of the body such as the genitalia. Appropriate times include being in the presence of a spouse, a medical exam and bathing. Inappropriate times involve the occasions,

people and places where others have no need or right to see our private body parts. Even homeless people have the sense to cover their *uncomely* parts. If we are a “holy nation” and people who have forsaken the “darkness” (1 Pet. 2:9), modesty should be a natural part of everyday life.

Comeliness (euschemosune) is only found here in the New Testament and the “focus of this term is the external appearance, conveying the sense of ‘propriety, decorum, external beauty.’ Thus it has the sense of ‘presentability’ (of clothing) and ‘modesty’ (in concealment). The unpresentable parts of the human body are given ‘greater presentability,’ i.e., are ‘treated with special modesty’ (1 Corinthians 12:23, NIV)” (CBL, GED, 2:652). Rienecker and Rogers (p. 430) offered this good but shorter definition: “presentable, decent.”

The word *comeliness* tells us (1) there are parts of the body which need to be covered, (2) not all clothing has God’s approval (some apparel is “immodest”), and (3) people are obligated to wear attire which is “presentable” (i.e. modest). If it be asked to whom our appearance should be presentable (modest), the first answer should be our maker (God). Verse 23 is one of the best passages in the Bible to teach about modesty. If private body parts are not adequately covered, people sin. Since Paul reminded the Corinthians about modesty, this is an appropriate subject for preachers and Bible class teachers to also discuss. Modesty is often a problem today, even for some who are Christians (many want to be “chased” instead of “chaste”). Sadly, a lot of Christians do not seem to see modesty as having anything to do with being a faithful Christian.

A preacher’s wife volunteered to care for some small children, one of whom was a two year old girl. This girl got dirty and the minister’s wife replaced her soiled clothing with a dress she had previously purchased from a used clothing store. When the girl’s mother returned several hours later, her daughter was still wearing the spare clothing and the minister’s wife explained that she kept spare clothing for just this type of occasion. The mother thought the second-hand dress being worn by her daughter, although clean, was *too plain*. She told the preacher’s wife, “*I just can’t shop at those stores. Those clothes don’t show off her girlish figure.*” Although this mother was a Christian, she showed little understanding of what Paul told the Corinthians.

If parents do not have a good sense of modesty, children will usually get their guidance from another source and that is often from the unsaved, people who frequently think that “showing skin is in.” The world excels at designing and wearing clothing that is tight, somewhat or very revealing, skimpy, low-cut, clingy, etc. Since Christians are to avoid “conforming to the world” (Rom. 12:2) and are “lights” to others (Mt. 5:14, 16), they must choose modesty over immodesty. Styles frequently change, but modesty is never out of style. In fact, immodesty is never “in-style” with God. Even if other Christians fail to be modest, we dress in such a way to avoid bringing reproach upon Christ or His church. Sadly, this is not always done by those who profess to be Christians. This author has heard of men who blush when serving the Lord’s Supper because some women and girls wear very short or revealing clothing to worship.

The information about man’s private body parts contains a second point of application. Just as man’s intimate body parts receive extra (special) attention through clothing, so this should also be true in local congregations (some Christians who seem “less honorable” should receive added and special attention). There should never be a time when some Christians in a local congregation are overlooked because they seem insignificant or they appear to contribute little to the local assembly. The church is a place where everyone should be treated as important and vital because all are members of one body (compare Jas. 1:27 and Jas. 2:1-3).

Some have attempted to take the various references to body parts in the preceding verses and allegorize them (i.e. each body part is made to represent something. The hands and feet have been interpreted as describing “active people” and the “ear and the eye” have been interpreted as people who have a more contemplative nature). If the various body parts refer to specific members or functions in the church, *who do the uncomely parts describe?* This present verse illustrates why we want to avoid allegorizing the information in this chapter as well as the other information in the Bible. Unless there is a compelling reason to understand a passage in a figurative way, we should understand the text literally. Lenski (p. 536) well said: “Fortunately, no commentator, not even Hofmann, has allegorized these parts and the ‘distinction they enjoy.’”

12:24: *whereas our comely (parts) have no need: but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to that (part) which lacked;*

This verse creates a contrast with verse 23 where Paul spoke of our “*less honorable*” body parts. Here he said some of our body parts are “*comely*” (*euschemon*), an adjective that meant “*proper, presentable, the presentable parts*” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 327). The NIV translates this term “presentable.” For all the other places in the New Testament where this word is found, see Mk. 15:43; Acts 13:50; 17:12; 1 Cor. 7:35. God designed some body parts to be exposed and visible for everyone to see. In fact, “*have no need*” is expressed with the present tense (some parts *continually* have no need to be covered). Other parts of the body, however, are to be concealed from public view (see verse 23 and notice that “bestow” in this verse is a present tense verb). Here in verse 24 Paul did not identify what the *comely* parts are (i.e. the body parts suitable for public viewing), but common sense suggests he had in mind things like the nose, fingers, ears, etc. Paul’s point, of course, is still related to the subject of modesty (verse 23).

When the point in verse 24 is applied to the church, the meaning is very apparent. There are some Christians who are like the naturally exposed parts of the body (these members are often “in the spotlight” and easy to identify). These parts would include preachers, elders, teachers, and deacons. Paul said these Christians do not need any extra attention. There are also many Christians who do not have such a “high profile” in most congregations (those who clean the church building, the person who locks the church building, the one who orders Bible class material, the treasurer, those involved with building maintenance, those who clear away snow, mow the grass, etc.). Paul said these less prominent Christians should receive additional (extra) consideration and respect, just like some parts of the body receive special attention (i.e. clothing and jewelry are added to certain body parts—verse 23).

The word “*tempered*” (*sunkerannumi*) in the middle of verse 24 is only used twice in the New Testament (here and Heb. 4:2). In this verse it means: “God has ‘compounded’ or ‘put together’ the Body in such a way as to help create peace in the Body. The word pictures God as a craftsman, structuring the Church intentionally and carefully, and mixing the gifts and personalities of the believers like a metallurgist mixes metals to give strength to the final product” (CBL, GED, 6:138). The upper part of our body has parts such as eyes and ears and these parts allow us to be on the alert for danger. In the middle of the body we have hands that can help defend against danger. The lower section of the body allows us to flee from danger. We have truly been “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14). Parts that are seemingly “unequal” all come together to form a perfect body.

Another definition for *tempered* is: “unite the body together into an organism” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:283). “The physical members are obliged, by the structure of the frame, to care for one another; the hand is as anxious to guard the eye or the stomach, to help the mouth or the foot, as to serve itself; the eye is watchman for every other organ; each feels its own usefulness and cherishes its fellows; all ‘have the same care,’ since they have the same interest—that of ‘the one body’” (The Expositor’s Greek Testament, 2:894).

God’s careful craftsmanship of the body is further expounded on with the word “*lacked*” (*hustereo*). Paul used this term three times in this book (here; 1:7—“come behind”; 8:8—“the worse”). In this verse it means “the inferior part” (Brown, 3:955). Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 531) defined this as “come behind.” *Lacked* is synonymous with *less honorable* in verse 23. God not only carefully and perfectly designed the human body, He gave “special care” (“*more abundant honor*”) to the parts that might otherwise seem unimportant. God acted in this manner to prevent “*schisms*” in the “*body*” (verse 25). As noted in the preceding information, this point applies to both man’s physical body as well as the church, God’s spiritual body.

“Paul’s message could not have been made any clearer. He was writing to a church wracked by internal division, squabbling, and bitterness over such false notions as stronger or weaker, greater or lesser Christians. Just as every member of the physical body has an important function, so every believer (even if he is weak!) has a vital role to fulfill” (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 423).

12:25-26: *that there should be no schism in the body; but (that) the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or (one) member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*

“*Schism*” (*schisma*) is used elsewhere in this letter (1:10; 11:18). In this verse it means “that which results from a splitting” (Rienecker and Rogers, p. 430). God has only one “body” (Eph. 4:4), the “church” (Eph. 1:22-23), and creating strife in this one body makes God angry (compare Prov. 6:19 and 1 Cor. 3:16-17). Paul said there is to “*be*” (a present tense verb) no division (verse 25) “*in the body.*” Since schisms deny that all the saved are joined to one Lord (1 Cor. 1:10, 13) and all the saved have membership in the one church (1 Cor. 12:12-26 and see especially 12:13), religious division is wrong. Just as the parts in our physical bodies need to work together and be harmonious, so God’s people are to pull together instead of work against each other (the “*members*” of the church “*should have the same care one for another*”). Too often Christians have divided over small and foolish things. In fact, most church problems and division have been based on personality, hurt feelings, and big egos instead of doctrine.

The word translated *care* (*merimnao*) is used in several other places in the New Testament (compare Mt. 6:28; Lk. 2:22; 1 Cor. 7:33-34); in some verses this term is translated “*anxious.*” In this verse *care* is a present tense verb and it means, “God has fashioned the church like a body so that ‘the members might care each alike for the other’” (Brown, 1:278). Instead of rivalry and a “*me first*” attitude in the church (compare Jas. 4:1-3), Christians are to be continually and anxiously concerned about fellow church members. The “*comely parts*” (24a) should be very concerned about the “*uncomely parts*” (verse 23) and vice versa.

In verse 26 Paul said Christians should share in the misfortunes and tragedies as well as the successes and joys of fellow saints. Just as a “broken wrist bone or a lung full of cancer affects the entire person, not just that one part of the body” (Gromacki, p. 157), so the various parts of the church should be affected when fellow Christians rejoice or sorrow. If a Christian secures a good job or a promotion, fellow Christians should rejoice. When a Christian faces a crisis such as unemployment or major surgery, fellow saints should quickly offer aid and comfort. Christians are to be a body of people that is like a loving family; they build one another up, correct each other when necessary, and help those who are struggling. Sometimes the good and evil things that happen to fellow Christians seem small; even in these cases we need to remember and apply the principle expressed here because even small things (as an ingrown toenail or a toothache) are often significant.

The word “*one*” shows the importance of every single Christian. It also indicates the degree of closeness that Christians should have. It is hard to share in the successes, failures, joys and sorrows of fellow Christians if we do not know much about them. When Christians behave as Paul described, the point made in verse 26 will always be true: A congregation will be one harmonious group (compare Rom. 12:15).

The words “*suffer with*” in 26b are from a single term (*sumpascho*) that is found only here and Rom. 8:17. In this verse *suffer with* means “*to suffer or feel pain together*” (Thayer, p. 597). Another important word, although it is most often associated with God (compare Mt. 5:16; Jn. 8:54; Rom. 15:9), is “*honored*” (*doxazo*). This is a present tense verb and it means “*a member is honored*” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 204). When a fellow member of the body is *honored*, Christians should “*rejoice*” (*sunchairo*), another present tense verb. Aside from here *rejoice* is found only in Lk. 1:58; 15:6, 9; 1 Cor. 13:6; Phil. 2:17, 18. Unlike the unsaved who often think or say, “I should be receiving the recognition,” “He doesn’t deserve that,” and “It was my idea that helped him,” Christians “give credit where credit is due” and rejoice with God’s people for their good fortune and blessings.

12:27-28: *Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof. 28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, (divers) kinds of tongues.*

In the previous verses (14-26) Paul showed how the human body has many different parts and how all these parts need to work together to have a properly functioning body. Here he reminded the Corinthians that they were the “*body of Christ*” (27a). In this body (i.e. a local congregation of Christians) every member (Christian) has various functions (compare verses 8-14) and every function is essential.

The end of verse 27 contains an idiom that means “individually” (Rienecker and Rogers, p. 430). Just as the apostles had different personalities, talents and backgrounds but they were able to form and function as a cohesive group, such is now God’s will for a local congregation. Jesus’ selection of the apostles seems to have foreshadowed the diversity of people and functions in the church. Tax collectors and zealots hated each other, but Jesus picked a tax collector (Matthew) and a zealot (Acts 1:13) to serve as apostles.

In verse 28 the word “*set*” (*tithemi*) means “he *appoints* the members of the congregation just as he did the apostle (1 Cor. 12:18, 28; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11)” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:356). Lenski (p. 537) noted how *set* “is placed before the subject and is thus made emphatic: it is God’s *act* – see what he *did*. This act extends far beyond the Corinthians who are only one congregation among many, and to whom, as a congregation, many members are yet to be added. Hence Paul writes: God did set ‘in the church’ and takes in the entire church of all places and all ages.” For more information on the word *set*, see the commentary on verse 18.

In the preceding material Paul said every member of the church is equal (compare Gal. 3:28). There is no partiality with God, but this equality does not mean everyone has the same job or function (see the commentary on 11:3, 7). Neither does equality mean all Christians will have the same talents or will be involved with the same activities. Just as everyone does not have the same circumstances and responsibilities in their day-to-day lives, so not everyone has the same job or function in the church. Verse 28 reminds us there are many tasks in the church, all these functions are important, some of these tasks are more noticeable than others, and some of these functions may “seem” (see the comments on verses 22-23) insignificant to us. For information on the word *church* (*ekklesia*), see the commentary on 11:16, 18.

When God created the church (it began on the Day of Pentecost described in Acts 2), it had *apostles*. Since these men were among the most noticeable and prominent, verse 28 describes them with the word “*first*.” After the apostles came *prophets*. Paul then listed *teachers*; notice that *teachers* are placed above the remaining things in verses 29-30 and this includes the supernatural gifts of *miracles*, *healings*, *tongue speaking* and the *interpretation of tongues*. Rienecker and Rogers (p. 430) observed how the “notion of subordination is to be found in these words.” Readers should also notice that the gift of tongues (the ability most valued by the Corinthians) is listed second to last (it was not nearly as important as the Corinthians thought). For more information on tongue speaking see the commentary on 12:10b; 12:10c; the special study on tongue speaking at the end of this chapter; and the information located in the commentary on 1 Cor. 14:2.

The **apostles** (*apostolos*) were personally selected by Jesus and they served as “witnesses” (Acts 1:8) to the truth of the gospel. These men received the “keys to the kingdom” (church), Mt. 16:18 and Mt. 18:18, and they were “baptized in the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:2-5, 8). Jesus said the apostles would be supernaturally guided by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26) and would receive “all the truth” (Jn. 16:13). These promises came true; all the religious truth was revealed to them by the close of the first century (Jude 3). The apostles were also able to transmit supernatural gifts such as those described in 1 Cor. 12-14 to other Christians by the “laying on of their hands” (Acts 8:18; 19:6). When the last apostle died, the ability to pass along spiritual gifts to others ceased. For more information on the duration of spiritual gifts see the commentary on 1 Cor. 13:8-10.

Judas was an apostle, but because of his treachery, he was replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:26). The only other person to be appointed an apostle was Saul, a man we often refer to as Paul (1 Cor. 1:1; 15:7-10). Today some claim to be apostles, but as noted in the commentary on 12:4, true apostles were limited to those who lived in the first century. The apostles, just like the prophets (Eph. 2:20), were part of the church’s “foundation” so they were not replaced when they died. In fact, the image in Eph. 2:20 “suggests

that the period in which the foundations of the church were laid is over” (Brown, 3:84). The church still has a continuing need for *new* (replacement) elders, deacons, preachers, Bible class teachers (non-miraculous offices), but there is no longer a need for supernatural gifts or prophets and apostles. The completed Scriptures make us spiritually complete. In fact, the Scriptures actually provide us with “apostles,” “prophets,” and “miraculous gifts” (see this point discussed in the commentary just prior to 12:5-6).

The word *apostle* meant *one sent*. While this term is sometimes used in a general way (Jesus is called an *apostle* in Heb. 3:1 because He was also *sent*), here the word seems to be limited to the men personally selected by Jesus as well as Matthias and Paul. As indicated in the preceding information, the apostles were special servants who received God’s revealed will (Eph. 3:5). In fact, the apostles wrote most of the New Testament.

Paul said that in the church the apostles were *first*. In contrast to the Catholic claims that speak of a “pope” and say this man “is the head of the church,” the Bible says the *apostles were first* and Christ is the “head of the church” (Eph. 5:23). Since Jesus’ headship and Lordship extends to both heaven and earth (Mt. 28:18), there is no room for another “head of the church” either in heaven or on earth. The word *pope* is not only missing from this verse, it is not found anywhere in the Bible.

The word **prophets** (*prophetes*) in verse 28 refers to New Testament prophets, but these men were very similar to the Old Testament prophets. Prophets comforted and edified God’s people (14:3-4) as well as foretold future events (Acts 21:10-11). They also presented information about God’s word (2 Pet. 1:19)—information that is sometimes described as “*mysteries*” (13:2). Part of a prophet’s job involved ensuring that their explanations of gospel truths were clearly understood (1 Cor. 14:23-25). A more formal definition for a prophet’s work is someone who proclaimed and expounded divine revelation (Brown, 3:81). During the Old Testament era *priests* offered sacrifices to God and *prophets* delivered a message from God; now all Christians are “priests” (1 Pet. 2:5, 9) and uninspired teachers comfort and edify Christians with information from the Scriptures.

God’s prophets, just like the apostles, came from many different backgrounds. There were men like Amos, a sheep breeder and farmer (Amos 7:14). Elisha (a farmer) became a prophet (1 Kgs. 19:19). Ezekiel the priest became a prophet (Ezek. 1:3). There is only one New Testament reference to a woman being specifically designated as a *prophetess* (Lk. 2:36). Jezebel, a woman who attempted to snare Christians with her evil ways, applied this title to herself (Rev. 2:20). Well-known New Testament prophets include Agabus (Acts 21:10), Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32). Philip had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9).

The work of prophets was similar to that of preachers today in that they publicly declared information from God, but their office was also quite distinct in that they did not need to study and prepare material before speaking (preachers today need to prepare their material in advance if they are going to truly “edify” those who hear them, 1 Cor. 14:26). Like the apostles, prophets had authority that extended beyond local congregations (Acts 11:27-28) and they were part of the church’s foundation (Eph. 2:20). For more information on prophets and prophecy, see the commentary on 14:31.

The third function listed in these verses is **teachers** (*didaskalos*). In this book this word occurs only here and the next verse. We are not told if these teachers were inspired (supernaturally guided by the Holy Spirit) or not, but many believe they possessed miraculous abilities that enabled them to teach the gospel to others. Since the context of this chapter does involve miraculous abilities, it is very possible that at least some teachers were inspired (this could have been one of the reasons James told his readers that teachers would receive “heavier judgment,” Jas. 3:1).

Now that the Bible is completed, teachers study and use the Scriptures to instruct people. In New Testament times, since people did not have a completed Bible, some were empowered with a variety of miraculous gifts to help teach and confirm the word (Mk. 16:15, 17-18, 20). As noted earlier in *Some thoughts on worship* (11:33-34), God gave His people special gifts to help them worship and serve Him under the Old Testament dispensation (Ex. 31:1-11; 35:25, 30-35; 1 Kgs. 7:13-14; 1 Chron. 28:11-21). Then, in the first century when the New Testament was instituted, God again provided His people with special gifts (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-14:40) and one of these gifts involved instructing others. Teachers

“had the task of explaining the Christian faith to others and of providing a Christian exposition of the OT” (Brown, 3:768). Whether inspired or not, first century teachers were to take their task very seriously (Jas. 3:1) and this point is still applicable for us. Bengel (2:238) noted how teachers are here said to “hold a high place, even above those who work *miracles*.”

After mentioning teachers Paul turned his readers’ attention from *people* to *things*. The first thing (29b) was a gift described as **miracles** (*dunamis*), a word Brown (2:605) defined as “the power which works signs and wonders.” *Miracles* were the ability to perform signs that from a human standpoint are impossible. The word **healings** (*iama*) is plural and it is further explained in the commentary on verse 9. Here we may say this gift was one of many functions which helped establish the truthfulness of the gospel. The gift of **helps** (*antilempsis*—an alternative spelling is *antilepsis*) is used only here in the New Testament. This term could refer to “individuals with resources (both spiritual and physical) which others lack” (CBL, GED, 1:301). It could also refer to *deacons* (1 Tim. 3:8-13) because the men who serve in this capacity are “helpers” in a local congregation. Since this term is plural, the Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (1:110) says this word “refers to the more specialized organizational work in the Church.” Additional support for viewing this word as a reference to deacons is suggested by the next word—**governments**.

The word translated *governments* (*kubernesis*) is used only here in the New Testament. In Classical Greek this word described a *helmsman* (someone who steered a ship). This term was also used in a figurative way to describe officials who governed. Here Kittel (3:1036) said the word describes “the specific gifts which qualify a Christian to be a helmsman to his congregation, i.e., a true director of its order and therewith of its life.” Since those who *steer* a congregation are elders (1 Tim. 3:5), and these men have special helpers (deacons, 1 Tim. 3:8-13), the *helps* in 28b probably refer to deacons. Understanding the “governments” as elders and “helps” as deacons is consistent with the context (for information on how the New Testament church is to be organized and governed, see the commentary on Phil. 1:1 as well as the study on New Testament Christianity at the end of this book).

The office of *elder* is mentioned throughout the New Testament. We read of elders in Judaea (Acts 11:29-30), southern Galatia (Acts 14:23), Jerusalem (Acts 15:6), Ephesus (Acts 20:17), and Asia Minor (1 Pet. 5:1). There seems to be a general reference to them in 1 Thess. 5:12 and Heb. 13:17. Paul referred to them being needed throughout the island of Crete (Tit. 1:5, “every city”). Qualifications for these men are given in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:6-9. In Acts 14:23 we learn that elders are to exist in “every congregation.” Elders are responsible for “taking care of” the local congregation (1 Tim. 3:5).

The final key word in verse 28 is “**tongues**” (*glossa*). In both the Greek and English the word *tongues* is plural. The plural indicates that those who spoke in tongues had the ability to speak in more than one language. Tongues were known languages that Christians used to evangelize the world (Mk. 16:15, 17). Since Christians would meet people who spoke a variety of languages, tongues (speaking in languages Christians had never learned) gave God’s people the ability to fully and instantly communicate in whatever dialect people spoke. Christians were instantaneously able to communicate the gospel to people such as the Persians, Scythians, Romans, Egyptians, Hebrews, etc. For more information about tongue speaking see the commentary on 12:10b; 12:10c; the special study on tongue speaking at the end of this chapter and the information located in the commentary on 1 Cor. 14:2.

12:29-30: *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all (workers of) miracles? 30 have all gifts of healings? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*

The questions in verses 29-30 are rhetorical and the implied answer for each inquiry is *no*. Not all were apostles. Neither were all prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, tongue speakers, and interpreters. A *no* answer to each of the questions harmonizes with the preceding material. Several times in the foregoing verses Paul said the body is composed of many members that function in a variety of ways so a body is complete (compare verses 12 and 17). Here was one more reminder that not every Christian could have the same spiritual gift because that would have left the early church incomplete in one or more areas.

All but one of the functions and gifts listed in verses 29-30 is discussed in the commentary on verses

27-28. The one ability not listed in the preceding verses is the **gift of interpretation**. This gift is translated from a single term (*diermeneuo*) that is found only a few times in the New Testament (for the other places this term occurs see 1 Cor. 14:5, 13, 27; Lk. 24:27 and Acts 9:36). This word also occurs outside the New Testament; in these non-Biblical sources (which were written prior to the New Testament) the *gift of interpretation* normally has the sense of “to translate” from one language to another.

The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament defined the *gift of interpretation* as “interpreter, translator” (1:322) and said the tongues were a “foreign language that can to some extent be translated word for word.” Spicq (1:317) suggested that those who had the gift of interpretation, “if necessary,” “added explanations and timely clarifications” so each person present would receive edification (1 Cor. 14:26).

When Jesus said “go into all the world” (Mt. 28:19) and “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15), the disciples faced a potential language barrier. How could they teach people who spoke languages different from their own? If the apostles could not speak or understand the *tongues* (languages) of others, how could souls be saved? The answer to these questions was found in the gift of tongues (Mk. 16:20) and the *interpretation of tongues*. Jesus not only gave a world-wide commission, He gave His people the ability to speak in languages they had never learned (Mk. 16:17) and understand whatever dialects were necessary so the gospel could be quickly and effectively spread throughout the first century world.

In addition to speaking in tongues, there were times when the *interpretation of tongues* was necessary. If a tongue speaker used his gift in the presence of people who did not understand the language he was speaking, and then told his listeners what he said, people had no way to verify that his “tongue speaking” was really what he claimed. As noted in the commentary on 12:10c, a Christian who had the “gift of interpretation” could verify that a tongue speaker had indeed spoken in a foreign language and one who had the interpretation of tongues could give an accurate interpretation of what had been said by a tongue speaker. The interpretation of tongues was a type of security measure; it verified that a tongue speaker was saying what he claimed.

12:31: *But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you.*

In this final verse Paul affirmed that some spiritual gifts were “*greater*” than others (“*greater gifts*”). While all the spiritual gifts were needed by the first century saints (this point is made throughout this chapter), some were superior or more important because of what they did. We might compare the point to an automobile and its title. Both the vehicle and the title are important and necessary, but the vehicle is more important than its title. A similar thing was true with the miraculous gifts. All the gifts were necessary just as all the parts in our human body are necessary (verses 14-17), but some gifts had less importance, prominence, and a lower rank.

This final verse reminds readers of Isa. 55:8-9 (Isaiah said man’s thoughts and ideas are often different from and lower than God’s thoughts and ideas). In the case of the Corinthians, these brethren wanted the “lesser gifts,” such as tongues. Also, the Corinthians were more concerned with their role in the church instead of the proper way to live. To help these Christians correct their thinking Paul said, “*desire earnestly the greater gifts*” (the KJV says “*covet earnestly the best gifts*”). The *best* spiritual gifts were things like *prophecy and teaching*—gifts that taught others about Christianity.

The expression *desire earnestly* (*zeloo*) can have both a positive and negative meaning in the New Testament; basically this word “signifies a human emotion which leads to action” (CBL, GED, 3:25). Paul used this same word to describe this same desire in 14:1, 39. Here *desire earnestly* is expressed with the present tense. The word translated *greater* (*kreitton*) meant “more prominent, higher in rank, preferable, better” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 449). Thayer (p. 359) defined this word as: “*more useful, more serviceable.*” More information about this term is found below.

There is some difficulty in understanding what Paul meant by *seeking* (desiring) spiritual gifts. One possibility is discussed in the commentary on verse 11 (although the Holy Spirit determined who received

what gifts, Christians could hope for and seek various gifts). If this view is accepted (compare 14:1, 39), it illustrates how God's power can work in conjunction with man's free-will. Christians could seek various gifts (i.e. they could have some part in the process), but the Holy Spirit determined who received what abilities (verses 11 and 28). A similar point is found in Jesus' description of the destruction of Jerusalem in Mt. 24. Jesus said the time for destruction would come, but Christians could "pray" that this day would not be "during the winter" or "on a Sabbath," times when the city gates would be closed and it would be impossible to escape (Mt. 24:20).

It is also possible to understand the thought as a reprimand—the Corinthians were earnestly seeking gifts that were the most noticeable so they could "show off" to others. Whichever idea Paul meant, both points are true. Holman (7:223-224) rightly noted how the "Corinthians had a very skewed view of spiritual gifts. They took personal pride in their gifts as if they had earned them or deserved credit for showing them. They were more interested in using their gifts for personal fulfillment than for the good of the body. They failed to realize the importance of the smallest gifts. They also failed to recognize the importance of those people whose gifts were seemingly least useful."

Since God gave gifts to first century saints, it was certainly not wrong to possess them or want to use them. It was, however, wrong to use them in an incorrect way, so Paul reminded the Corinthians of what they should do. He said these Christians were to pay attention to the *greater gifts* (the KJV says "*best*"). As shown in the preceding verses of this chapter, all the supernatural gifts had a necessary part in God's plan (compare verses 14, 17), but Paul also recognized that some gifts did seem to be more prominent than others (verses 17, 22-24). Tongue speaking and the interpretation of tongues might have appeared to be the most desirable gifts, but Paul said these abilities were actually among the least important gifts (they are put last in the list of gifts in verses 28-30). If these Christians wanted gifts, they were to seek the superior abilities such as *prophecy* (14:39). Tongue speaking should not be "despised" (14:39b), but it was not the preferred or one of the more important abilities (14:39a).

The word *greater* (ASV) or *best* (KJV) is based on a manuscript variation. Some manuscripts have a word (*kreitton*) that meant "better." This word is often used in the book of Hebrews, especially the first part of the book, to describe how the New Testament is superior to the Old Testament (see Heb. 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23, etc.). Other manuscripts have a different term (*meizon*) that also meant *greater*. This word is used again in 13:13 ("the *greatest* of these is love") and 14:5 ("*greater* is he that prophesieth"). Whichever word Paul intended to use, the point of these final verses, as well as the illustrations earlier in this chapter, is clear. All the gifts were necessary and useful, but the Corinthians should have sought the *greater* gifts. This point is the complete opposite of what occurs in modern Pentecostalism, a movement which has much to say about "tongue speaking."

In addition to telling the Corinthians about the *greater gifts*, Paul wanted to share with them the "*most excellent way*" (love, chapter 13). Paul said he wanted to "*show*" (*deiknumi*) the Corinthians this way. *Show* is a present tense verb that here means "'to show' in the sense of 'to indicate something verbally,' and therefore 'to teach, explain or demonstrate'" (Kittel, 2:26). This is the same word the Bible uses to describe Satan "showing" Jesus the kingdoms of the world (Mt. 4:8; Lk. 4:5) and a leper "showing" himself to a priest after being pronounced clean (Mk. 1:44).

Another key word is *excellent* (*hyperbole*), a term that occurs only a few times in the New Testament. In Rom. 7:13 Paul used this same word to describe "exceeding" sinfulness. In 2 Cor. 1:8 this term is translated "weighed down exceedingly" (the KJV says "pressed out of measure"). In 2 Cor. 4:17 this word is translated "more exceeding." In Gal. 1:13 it is rendered "beyond measure." Paul wanted to show these Christians (and us) the best way to live life and part of this way involved understanding that spiritual gifts did not make Christians superior to others. The best way to live—which is described in the next chapter—is *love*. Even when compared with all the other spiritual gifts, *love* is the most important thing. Love is not an "okay way" or even a "better way" than what the Corinthians had chosen. Love is the *best* way—the "way beyond all comparison" (Rienecker and Rogers, p. 431). It is unfortunate that most do not understand this way, or if they do understand it, they do not live in this manner. Also, what people often call love is very different from the Biblical definition of love. Some profess to have love but they are hypocrites. Others profess to have a love for God, but they do not fully follow His word (Jn.

14:15; 15:12-14). For more information on the transition between this and the next chapter, see the introductory commentary to 1 Cor. 13.

A special study on tongue speaking

The modern tongues movement is usually traced back to Charles F. Parham (1873-1929). Parham was a former Methodist minister who opened a Bible college in Topeka, Kansas. He believed people could receive a great outpouring of divine power. After hands were laid on one of his students (Agnes Ozman), this girl “spoke in tongues.” Soon more than 30 other students were also “speaking in tongues.” Parham then took the Pentecostal or “full gospel” message to various parts of the United States (Galena, Kansas; Lawrence, Kansas; El Dorado Springs, Missouri; Joplin, Missouri; Kansas City, Missouri; Orchard and Houston, Texas) and this movement continues at the present time throughout the world. Before Parham many others wrote and spoke about tongue speaking, including: Irenaeus (130-200 A.D.), Tertullian (160-220 A.D.), Chrysostom (345-407 A.D.), Augustine (354-430 A.D.). For a fuller study of this subject see Hoekema (pp. 10-33).

Some excellent books have been written on tongue speaking, two of which are “*The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*” by John P. Kildahl and “*What About Tongue Speaking?*” by Anthony A. Hoekema. Kildahl was a psychotherapist who studied tongue speaking for ten years (his work was sponsored by the American Lutheran Church as well as the National Institute of Mental Health). He traveled coast to coast listening to tongue speakers use their gift and explain their beliefs. He also recorded his own personal observations.

Hoekema was Professor of Systematic Theology at the Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His book is largely based on lectures given at the Conservative Baptist Seminary in Denver, Colorado in 1964 and this material focuses on a Biblical and theological evaluation of tongue speaking. In addition to these resources, which are cited below, readers are encouraged to consult and study the chart on tongues located in the commentary on 14:2 in this book.

Tongue speaking is sometimes called *glossolalia*, a term based upon two Greek words: *Glossa* (the tongue) and *lalein* (to talk or speak). Many who now claim to speak in tongues profess to follow Jesus, but “Glossolalia or speaking in tongues is not restricted to Christian experience. Ecstatic utterances of a divinely inspired nature are mentioned in early Egyptian writings. The oracles of Delphi, Dodona, and Epirus among many others, which laid claim to prophecy, sometimes through the spirits of the dead, appear to be related to glossolalia” (Kildahl, p. 11).

Questions and answers about tongue speaking:

Are all tongue speakers members of the Pentecostal movement? No. As indicated in the preceding paragraph, non-Christians (heathens) have claimed to speak in tongues. In recent times tongue speakers have claimed membership in the Lutheran church, the Episcopal faith, the Presbyterian church, the Baptist faith, the Russian Orthodox religion and even Catholic churches. “The Church of the Latter-day Saints—popularly known as Mormons—was founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith in New York. Belief in gifts of the Spirit was one of its articles of faith. Emphasis was placed on ‘the gifts of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.’” (Kildahl, pp. 17-18). Some of the early Quakers also professed to speak in tongues; one of the best known was the so called “Ranters in England.”

Claims about tongue speaking have come from many different countries including the United States, Sweden, Norway, etc. Gromacki (The Modern Tongues Movement, p. 9) noted how some Eskimos in Greenland are said to have engaged in tongue speaking. Their “religious services are led by the *angakok*, the medicine man or priest. In these services, there is a definite attempt to get in touch with the nether world. The services are characterized by drum beating, singing, dancing, and nudity of both men and women.”

Claims of tongue speaking have not only been world-wide, they have sometimes involved the very young (in some cases children as young as four are said to have spoken in tongues). Tongue-speaking claims also pre-date the New Testament. One claim comes from the “Report of Wenamon,” approximately 1100 B.C. A young worshipper of “Amon” is said to have become possessed of a god and spoken in a frenzied and ecstatic language.

Why do people want to speak in tongues? There may be many reasons, but Kildahl (p. 4) noted that this “experience brings peace and joy and inner harmony. Glossolalists view it as an answer to prayer, an assurance of divine love and acceptance.” See, too, the *How intense is the tongue speaking experience* question and answer below.

Are people taught to speak in tongues? True tongue speaking (the divine gift from God) was not “taught.” The Holy Spirit determined who received this gift (1 Cor. 12:7-11) and Christians were automatically able to speak in tongues (languages they had never learned) without any prompting or guidance. Today, what is called *tongue speaking*, is often a “taught gift” (people are trained to “speak in tongues”).

Shortly after this author became a Christian, a member of the Pentecostal movement offered to “teach him to speak in tongues in less than ten minutes.” Similar offers are still made and Kildahl (p. 3) offered a specific example of how this is done. People have knelt as a group “and the leader encouraged them to try to ‘receive’ this ability. He went from one to another, laying his hands on each person’s head. Bill told me that with a prayer in tongues and with encouragement, the leader asked him to make an effort to move his lips in a free and relaxed manner. ‘Say after me what I say, and then go on speaking in the tongue that the Lord will give you.’ ‘Aish nay gum nay tayo...’ prayed the leader and waited for Bill to repeat the same sounds, and then go on in his own words. Bill tried. ‘Aish nay gum nay tayo...’ and then stopped. ‘Aish nay gum nay tayoo...Aish nay gum nay tayoo...’ The leader, keeping both of his hands on Bill’s head again prayed that Bill would open himself to receive the ‘gift of the Spirit.’”

Tongue speakers have even gone so far as to grab the chin of a non-tongue speaker and say, “I’ll move your chin; make the sounds I have made” to help someone start *speaking in tongues*. This process makes a mockery of God’s power and the true gifts. It is also contrary to what we find in the Bible (read carefully Acts 8:15-18 and Acts 19:1-6). Kildahl also noted (p. 3) how two participants in this group “tried earnestly, and the leader exhorted them, placing his hands on their heads, but the words never came.” Kildahl concluded (p. 74) that “tongue speaking is a learned phenomenon” and “is explicable in rational ways” (p. 85). For additional information on this point see the commentary on 1 Cor. 12:10b.

Do tongue speakers often misapply Bible passages? Yes. Advocates of tongue speaking frequently try to inject the supernatural into parts of the Bible where such was never intended by God. One example of this is found in Jas. 5:7, a passage that speaks of the “early and latter rain.” The original thought is that farmers in Palestine literally rely upon rain for their crops. The *early rain* comes at the end of October or November and loosens the soil so farmers can plant their crops. The *latter rains* come in March and April and help crops mature. Pentecostal teachers have claimed that the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is an example of “early rain” and our day and time is “the latter rainy season.” Since we allegedly live in the “latter rainy season,” Pentecostal teachers have said “spiritual gifts are still available.” Paul refuted this idea in places such as 1 Cor. 13:8-10.

Pentecostal teachers have also incorrectly claimed that other verses such as Acts 4:31 (Christians “were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word with boldness”) refer to tongue speaking. Other texts such as Rom. 8:26 (the Spirit makes intercession for Christians that cannot be uttered); Eph. 5:19 (Christians sing “spiritual songs”); Eph. 6:18 (Christians pray “in the Spirit”); 1 Thess. 5:19-20 (“quench not the spirit” and “despise not prophesying”); and 1 Pet. 4:11 (“speak as the oracles of God”) have been misconstrued to support Pentecostal claims. Because these incorrect interpretations come from people who claim to be led or directed by the Holy Spirit, their misapplication of various passages is on-going proof that people claiming to be led and directed by the Holy Spirit are not true servants of God (this point is also discussed in the commentary on 12:3a and 12:3b).

Have Pentecostal believers ever “tarried” (waited) for the Holy Spirit to come upon them? Yes; in some cases people are said to have “wrestled with God” to receive Holy Spirit baptism or the “gift of tongues.” This false idea is based on Lk. 24:49, a passage where Jesus made a promise to His apostles. Heaven fulfilled this promise on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5, 8; 2:1-4). Aside from this specific promise to the apostles, no individual or group of people in the New Testament was ever told to “tarry for the Holy Spirit.”

Do those who speak in tongues believe tongues are always for the same purpose? No. Some regard tongues as a sign that someone has received Holy Spirit baptism and this sign may be temporary (i.e. the person may only be able to speak in tongues for a while and, then, the gift ceases). Others think tongues are given and this sign is permanent. Still others claim that tongues are for “devotional use” (i.e. this gift helps them pray, give thanks or sing). There are also those who think tongues are “congregational” (they are to be used at or during a worship service).

How strongly do tongue speakers believe in their “gift”? One man, and his opinion seems typical of tongue speakers, said: “I do not know what language I have and I don’t question it. I believe it is from God and that is good enough for me” (Kildahl, p. 7). Since members of the Pentecostal movement usually elevate their experience above what the Bible says, this is one more proof that it is not of divine origin (compare 1 Thess. 5:21 and Mt. 7:21-23).

Do tongue speakers believe they are receiving a message from God? In some cases, yes. Kildahl (p. 8) noted how one said, “God will use this gift when God wishes to give a direct message to the people.”

While all the errors associated with claims about tongue speaking are troublesome, this one is especially serious. When people believe God is still giving messages to people through their “gifts,” but the Bible says heaven’s message to man is already 100% complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3), we must either accept the claims of tongue speakers and reject what Paul and Peter said or accept the claims of the inspired apostles and reject the claims of tongue speakers. We cannot believe both New Testament teaching and Pentecostal claims. For more reasons why Pentecostalism conflicts with the Scriptures, see the commentary on 12:13b.

How intense is the tongue speaking experience? “Emotionally, the experience was one of fantastic

release, comparable in intensity to sexual orgasm, or to the sense of freedom just after an intense stomach cramp subsides” (Kildahl, p. 46).

Is it fair to say that tongue speakers elevate their experience over the Bible? Yes. If a tongue speaker is feeling discouraged, “he can begin to speak in tongues and recall that God is with him, that glossolalia is a special gift from God, and that he can unload his problems through releasing his feelings in tongue-speech. Each time he speaks in tongues, he performs a physical act which he surrounds with a set of beliefs reconfirming that he is a special person, specially blessed” (Kildahl, pp. 46-47). First century tongue speakers could use their gift for personal edification (see 1 Cor. 14:28 and the comment on this gift), but now that the Scriptures have been completed, edification comes through the New Testament (Acts 20:32).

Why did the Pentecostal movement become so popular in the twentieth century? There are several answers to this question, but only a few of them will be listed here. Pentecostalism was zealously promoted and too many preachers were unwilling or ignorant to refute the false claims. A third reason for its popularity is that people want a “taste of the supernatural.”

Does Pentecostalism make other claims? Yes, and many of these claims lay great stress on what is material instead of what is spiritual. Pentecostalism has often focused on solving man’s earthly problems (healing the sick and prosperity to the poor). In some foreign countries Pentecostalism has offered protection from witchcraft and promised children to the barren. Pentecostal preachers have often stressed physical blessings instead of stressing the terribleness of sin and man’s need for salvation. While Jesus and the apostles did heal and help the poor, these acts were only tools to help people with their greatest need: Salvation.

The emphasis by Pentecostal groups on material prosperity, especially in the United States, has been unmistakable. This author has spoken with “tongue speakers” who said their relationship with God was financially beneficial to them (i.e. they went to bed with \$5 in their pocket and woke up with \$10). Kildahl (p. 8) reported this as well: “He (Jesus, BP) is our banker—He puts money in our pocket, He makes a \$5 bill stretch into a \$10 bill, He pulls us back from danger and covers us from unknown dangers.”

Do people believe their “spiritual gifts” increase their spirituality? Yes. It is often claimed that having a gift such as tongues provides people with a new and greater level of spiritual maturity. While this is a popular belief, it is false and Paul showed the error of this claim in this letter. The Corinthians excelled in gifts such as tongue speaking, but they suffered from internal division, lawsuits, sexual sin, and possibly drunkenness at the Lord’s table (be sure to read 1 Cor. 3:1). Also, rather than indicate maturity, as shown in the discussion on 13:10-12, spiritual gifts were a sign of spiritual infancy.

What are the basic conclusions about tongue speaking? Hoekema (p. 126) rightly quoted V. Raymond Edman who said, “there are really only three possibilities: Either glossolalia today is of the devil, or it is a genuine gift of the Spirit, or it is a phenomenon which, without being either primarily inspired by the devil or by the Spirit, has been psychologically induced.” Since modern tongue speaking is not “of the Spirit” (see the commentary on 1 Cor. 13:8-10), what is now done is either psychologically induced, a tool of Satan, or both. Let’s not forget that Satan “fashions himself into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14) and he has previously used “signs” to lead people astray (Mt. 24:24). Satan’s signs are called “lying signs” in 2 Thess. 2:9.

What Bible books refer to tongue speaking? Only three New Testament books refer to tongue speaking (Mark, Acts and First Corinthians).

Where can we find all the New Testament verses on tongue speaking? See Mk. 16:17; Acts 2:4-11;

10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28). For a contrast between the Biblical gift of tongues and modern claims, see the chart located in the commentary on 14:2.

Are tongue speakers consistent in how they handle the Scriptures? No, and one terrific example of this is found in Mk. 16:17-18. Jesus said people would “speak with new tongues” (verse 17) and “take up serpents” (verse 18). Each of these statements is expressed exactly the same way in the Greek text (Jesus used the future indicative to describe both actions). If Mk. 16:17 means tongue speaking is for today, believers are also to handle snakes (verse 18). There is no way to say that tongue speaking can be done unless one is also willing to handle snakes. Since Pentecostal teachers do not want to handle snakes, they have been forced to re-interpret the word “snakes” to mean “enemies.” This is just one more example of how people “wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16).

What happens today when tongues are “interpreted?” Many times the “interpretation” is very general or people claim the tongue speaker was expressing thanksgiving to God. Kildahl (p. 63) cited an example of a young man who attended a meeting and said the words of the “Lord’s Prayer” in an African dialect he learned in his youth. There was an “interpreter of tongues” present at this meeting and the interpreter said the young man said *Jesus’ second coming was imminent!* The words were incorrectly interpreted and a false prediction was made about Jesus’ final return. For a discussion of the genuine gift of “interpretation of tongues,” see the commentary on 12:10c.

Do tongue speakers often rely upon a leader? Yes, and Kildahl (p. 44) said his research showed it was “vital” for tongue speakers to have a “complete sense of trust and confidence in the leader.” On this same page he described how tongue speakers often refer to their leaders: “‘That man is a holy man.’ ‘He is fantastic, I never met someone who is as sincere and dedicated as he is.’ ‘He truly lives every moment close to the Lord.’ ‘She is utterly charismatic, her whole life is a gift from God to the rest of us.’” This author has heard similar claims from the tongue speakers he has encountered. In fact, as Kildahl (p. 44) said, it can be “difficult to distinguish whether glossolalists were talking about their leader or about Jesus.”

“It is not surprising that a profound sense of trust in a leader is necessary for beginning to speak in tongues, just as it is for the induction of hypnosis” (ibid). Kildahl also (p. 50) said: “We never met a deeply involved tongue-speaker who did not have some leader to whom he looked for guidance” and the “importance of the leader was well illustrated by the fact that the style of glossolalia adapted by the group bore a close resemblance to the way in which the leader spoke” (ibid, p. 53).

Has modern tongue speaking been viewed negatively? Yes. In the past some have regarded tongue speakers as naïve and gullible people who accepted things without investigation. Today those who claim to speak in tongues can be found in virtually every walk and profession of life (doctors, lawyers, ministers, professors, etc.).

Why do some people speak of the “Holy Ghost” and others refer to the “Holy Spirit?” Many within the Pentecostal movement seem to prefer the word “ghost” because this term more quickly stirs the emotions and passions of people. *Ghost* has an almost eerie sound to it and is useful in creating an environment that is often not “decent and orderly” (compare 1 Cor. 14:40).

While the KJV normally uses the words “Holy Ghost” instead of “Holy Spirit,” there are four places in the New Testament where the KJV says “Holy Spirit” instead of “Holy Ghost” (see Lk. 11:13; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 1 Thess. 4:8).

Introduction to First Corinthians 13:

Some consider 1 Cor. 13 the “love chapter of the Bible” or a “parenthetical description of love,” but this chapter is actually an integral part of Paul’s discussion about spiritual gifts. Since the Corinthians

were rude, jealous, and boastful, it was necessary for them “to go beyond their present pursuit. To the apostle, the development of the character of the person was superior to the exercise of the gift. His contrasts (chap. 13) are clear: gifts without love vs. gifts with love, and the permanence of love vs. the temporal nature of gifts” (Gromacki, p. 159). Stated another way, verses 1-3 affirm that spiritual gifts were worthless without love, verses 4-7 affirm that love was superior to the gifts, and verses 8-13 assert that spiritual gifts were temporal but love abides. Although 1 Cor. 13 may seem familiar to many, this chapter is often one of the most misunderstood parts of the New Testament.

The Corinthians’ elevation of spiritual gifts over love is seen in places such as 12:13-25; 14:27-33, 40. It is also found by contrasting the qualities in 1 Cor. 13 with other sections of this epistle. For instance, love “suffers long” (13:4), but tongue speakers at Corinth were impatient (14:27-28). Love does not “envy” (13:4), but the Corinthians envied the gifts of others (chapter 12). Love “is not puffed up” (13:4), but tongue speakers were proud (compare 13:1). Love causes people to act in a kind and orderly way, but some of the Corinthians’ behavior was disorderly (14:23, 40). Love is not “unseemly,” but the Corinthians were at risk of unseemly behavior in their families (1 Cor. 7:36) as well as their Sunday assemblies (1 Cor. 11:2-16, 17-34). Agape love “does not seek its own” (13:5), but these Christians were seeking their own (see 1 Cor. 8 and the discussion about idol meat). Love keeps people from “rejoicing in evil” (13:6), but the Corinthians rejoiced in evil (1 Cor. 5:2, 6). There were various things that “provoked” these brethren (13:5) and it seems they were “keeping a record of evil” (1 Cor. 13:5). It was time for the members of this congregation to show some spiritual maturity and demonstrate the type of love that “bears all things, believes all things, hopes in all things, and endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:7).

While this chapter is directly related to the subject of spiritual gifts, it does provide us with a divine explanation of what true love is (in verses 4-8 love is described with sixteen different qualities). Man desperately needs this information because society is often clueless about true love. More than 1,300 different meanings of love have come from people like philosophers and poets, but human wisdom is unable to adequately define love. Love has also been complicated by Satan; one of his tools is distorting the true meaning of love.

Some think of love as a feeling, something like fondness or affection, or a thing that may come and go with time. God says true love is a way of life. As noted in the commentary on 1a, love is an attitude that causes people to make sacrifices. In fact, love might be compared to a candle. Just as a candle is quiet and is expended for the benefit of others, so love causes people to “spend and be spent” (2 Cor. 12:15) for others. True love costs something and Paul tried to communicate this fact with three distinct points in this chapter: The “preeminence of love” (verses 1-3), the “practice of love” (verses 4-7), and the “permanence of love” (verses 8-13).