

1 Corinthians Chapter 12

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

Date: 19 March 2017

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Now Sous-titrage ST' 501 goodness restores my soul.

And I will trust in you alone. And I will trust in you alone.
For your endless mercy follows me. Your goodness will lead me home.
He has my raising righteousness. And he annoys my head with oil.
And I cup it all of those with joy. And his love is pure delight.

[1 : 24] And I will trust in you alone. And I will trust in you alone.

For your endless mercy follows me. Your goodness will lead me home.
And though I walk the darkest mile. I will not dare be evil one.
For you love with me and your brother and staff. And I will trust in you alone.
And I will trust in you alone. And I will trust in you alone.

[2 : 27] And I will trust in you. For your endless mercy follows me. Your goodness will lead me home.

For your endless mercy follows me. For your endless mercy follows me. For your endless mercy follows me. Corinthians chapter 12. As we have been these last weeks. And even months considering Paul's letter.

To the church in Corinth. If you have one of the church Bibles. One of the red church Bibles. It's page 1153.

Page 1153. We're going to read the whole of the chapter together. To chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians. If you have the New International Version.

It will have a subtitle above it. Concerning Spiritual Gifts. Now about the gifts of the Spirit. Brothers and sisters.

[3 : 29] I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans. Somehow or other. You were influenced. And led astray to dumb idols. Therefore I want you to know.

That no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God. Says Jesus be cursed. And no one can say Jesus is Lord. Except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of gifts.

But the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service. But the same Lord. There are different kinds of working. But in all of them. And in everyone.

It is the same God at work. Now to each one. The manifestation of the Spirit. Is given for the common good. To one there is given. Through the Spirit. A message of wisdom.

To another. A message of knowledge. By means of the same Spirit. To another. Faith. By the same Spirit. To another. Gifts of healing. By that one Spirit. To another.

[4 : 30] Miraculous powers. To another. Prophecy. To another. Distinguishing between spirits. To another. Speaking in different kinds of tongues. To still another. The interpretation of tongues.

All these are the work of one. And the same Spirit. And he distributes them. To each one. Just as he determines. Just as a body. Though one. Has many parts.

But all its many parts. Form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized. By one Spirit. So as to form one body.

Whether Jews or Gentiles. Slave or free. We were all given the one Spirit. To drink. And so the body is not made up. Of one part. But of many.

Now if the foot should say. Because I am not a hand. I do not belong to the body. It would not for that reason. Stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say.

[5 : 27] Because I am not an eye. I do not belong to the body. It would not for that reason. Stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye. Where would the sense of hearing be.

If the whole body were an ear. Where would the sense of smell be. but in fact God has placed the parts of the body every one of them just as he wanted them to be if they were all one part where would the body be as it is there are many parts but one body the eye cannot say to the hand I don't need you and the head cannot say to the feet I don't need you on the contrary those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty while our presentable parts need no special treatment but God has put the body together giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it so that there should be no division in the body but that its parts should have equal concern for each other if one part suffers every part suffers with it if one part is honored every part rejoices with it now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it and God has placed in the church first of all apostles second prophets third teachers then miracles then gifts of healing or helping of guidance and of different kinds of tongues are all apostles are all prophets are all teachers do all work miracles do all have gifts of healing do all speak in tongues do all interpret now eagerly desire the greater gifts and yet I will show you the most excellent way let me thank God for his wonderful word let's turn back then to 1 corinthians and please have that open in your bibles that will be helpful as we work our way through this chapter uh this practical chapter uh from the apostle paul to the church in corinth and apply it again to ourselves i don't know how often you get to visit a charity shop it's one of the things that me and ang do if we're ever visiting anywhere let's go and see till you where there's some really really good charity shops that's redker really excellent there i got a lovely i've got that one i've got a lovely jacket that i got from there anyway that's beside the point but if you go into a into a charity shop you'll see usually one side up on the top shelf will be jigsaws lots and lots of jigsaws and i think probably some people take them and then you do them and then bring them back and uh there's jigsaws with all sorts of different pictures aren't there there's scenic views over the mountains or a harbor view like whitby or an old master's painting or uh cute animals or any anything that you could possibly want and uh of course depending on your skill level will depend on what uh jigsaw you want uh for me you know it's usually four piece but uh for those a bit more experience is 500 piece jigsaw or a thousand and if you're a grand master i imagine there's such a thing of the jigsaw world two thousand pieces is the least number of pieces that you would even bother spending your time on and if you buy one from the charity shop you'll nearly always have a little sticker in the top corner that has the words written in biro complete uh and that's always puzzled me how do they know do they do they count every single piece of a 2000 jigsaw and if do they actually make it do they have people in the back whose job is to make the whole jigsaw make sure all the pieces are there and then they can sell them and nodding because maybe that's some of your part-time occupation i'm not sure but it's so important isn't it because i'm sure we've all had the experience we've bought a jigsaw we've taken it home and we've done the whole thing and there's just that one piece missing and it makes the whole thing ruins the whole thing one piece uh is necessary every piece matters i hope you know where i'm going with that illustration uh there is no peace that is unnecessary not just in a jigsaw but of course in the church and that's what paul is getting at here as he writes the church in corinth his purpose and aim has been in the past chapters as well to get across to the believers there that every single church member is of vital importance every single one is necessary every single one is to be counted of the same value every single one is to be considered just as precious just as important just as to be cared for and what has been a problem of course in corinth is that that has not been the case the believers there have been careless of one another the rich have been careless of the poor and so when they've had the the sort of the lord's supper a feast they the rich have eaten all the all the food and drunk all the drink to the detriment of the poor they've seen that with the the strong those whose consciences are clear about eating meat sacrifice to idols they have despised the weaker conscience of other believers who struggle with that and counted as something wrong the majority of the church in corinth has lost sight of the vital reality that every piece matters now they've come from a world which is godless a world very similar to our own society a world in which they have been living and they have carried some of those attitudes from the world into the world into the church as they've come in they've not left behind some of the sinful selfish attitudes that were there at the door they brought them in and so as we've gone through the latter we've seen them quarreling having divisions acting greedily just to name a few but of course the essence the very uh simplest uh uh way of explaining and thinking about their attitude is that one of self-interest it's the eye in sin you've seen that little talk what's the problem with sin it's what's right in the middle of sin is i and that's the problem with the church in corinth

that's the problem that we have not just because of this church but whatever church we're part of whatever people we are that's always the conflict it's the eye that gets in the way it's the eye the selfishness the the individual attitude of what's in it for me that stops us from being the believers we should be that stops us from being the christ-like people that god wants us to be and so the matter of unity in the church is something which is very important as i say paul has been bringing out this truth again and again it touches upon them when they're sharing in the lord's supper touches upon them when they're doing their shopping for the meat in the market and eating a meal together it touches upon them when they take one another to court upon their divisions and their cliques and their sects in one sense within the church the matter of unity in the church is one of the most important if not the most important area of church life it affects everything our worship our evangelism our service our prayer everything and therefore the opposite is true individualism is the most destructive and harmful force in a church to be concerned about ourselves only renders a church useless renders a church dead renders a christian fruitless and so in this section in this chapter 12 we are in the middle of a bigger section running from chapters 11 right the way through to 14 which is about what happens when the church comes together what's happened when believers gather just as we're doing here now or we do in the midweek or we do in a home group how we worship together how we grow together under god's instruction how we love one another and serve one another that's what it's all about and so we find when we get to chapter 12 again paul has to point out graciously that the christians in corinth are ignorant i do not want you to be uninformed it means ignorant i don't want you to be acting in ignorance anymore because that's exactly what they've been doing ignorantly harmfully in their behavior now as as we've gone through as i've said this is about worship together it's about working together and one of the problems of course with individualism is that it produces disorder it produces a a confusion and chaos and as i've said several times the key verse in this section is chapter 14 verse 33 for god is not a god of disorder but of peace and the very last verse in the section which is verse 40 of chapter 14 is this everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way you can imagine it's in any organization if you take the army and and every single soldier is doing what he wants to do or what he thinks he should be doing it would just be terrible wouldn't it if he wasn't under the wasn't obeying the orders of the officer in charge or or or the sergeant in charge and one was there one was here and one was this it would just be completely overwhelmed by the enemy disorder comes from individualism and when we become christians this is the glorious thing as we shall see that we are brought together into one people and we're to worship with that thought in mind so when we come to chapter 12 he's dealing particularly with gifts gifts when we worship together when we serve together when we work together we each have differing gifts of the holy spirit spiritual gifts there in verse 3 speaking about those who speak by the spirit of god and particularly of course verse 4 and following different kinds of gifts but the same spirit distributes sin now these christians had come from not only an unconverted world but they'd come from a pagan world they were not unaware of spiritual things the pagan gods that they worship the pagan gods that they sacrificed to the pagan gods that they brought offerings to were in fact spirits demonic spirits in fact paul has pointed that out to them earlier on in chapter 10 he says the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons it's a real spiritual world a real spiritual world which has god who is spirit and has satanic spirits on the other side there is a real battle there is a real spiritual conflict that's taking place just read ephesians chapter 6 just see what goes on in some of the stories and events in the old testament just see the ministry of jesus again and again dealing with people who are overcome influenced possessed by demons the devil is not a fairy story he's not a boogeyman that's just made up to make sure that you behave yourself he is real and the spiritual battle that christians are involved with is real as well and the world in which we live jesus has said is under the influence of the evil one now when these people before they were believers and when they were involved in this demonic worship they were people who were influenced by these spirits they were guided by these spirits

verse 2 you know that when you were pagan somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to dumb idols there was an influence upon them a spiritual influence upon them that guided them into sinful ways but here they are worshiping together here they are meeting together and the big question is which spirit is at work which spirit is present with them is it god the holy spirit who's ministering and working amongst them or is it a demonic spirit who's working amongst them or perhaps is it simply their their own spirit their sinful nature that is there taking control how are we to discern how are we to discern how are we to discern whether that's which one it is in any meeting of

god's people now paul uses very clear sanctified common sense he lays down key tests for us as individuals for us as individuals and for us as a church for them as a church that we may judge for ourselves are we in the presence of god the holy spirit at work here is there something which is demonic which is taking place here or is this actually just the the overflow of the the the natural spirit of the heart the natural person what about us when we're meeting together here sunday by sunday or in a bible study or in a home group are we as a church manifesting the holy spirit's presence or just imagining that the holy spirit is with us us but in reality it's just us just us stirring ourselves up us seeking our own desires let's look at the evidences for the work of the spirit let's look at the the evidences that paul lays out here that show that god the holy spirit is at work in a local church is at work in a meeting together with god's people and the first thing is very simple and very clear verse three i want you to know that no one who is speaking by the spirit of god says jesus be cursed and no one who says jesus is lord except by the holy spirit now we're not meant to understand that these two opposing sentences are just empty forms of words in other words as long as there's a gathering of people and they're all saying jesus is lord jesus lord that's fine that must mean that that is a spiritual gathering of god's people no what paul is saying is there's something very deep here something very spiritual here to say jesus is lord is the most concise summary of christian doctrine okay the most concise summary of what we believe as christians is that jesus is lord is a full a full book worth as it were or 10 books worth or library worth of truth in those three little words for just us to say with meaning jesus be cursed is to utterly reject the gospel of christ and deny him his rightful place as a savior of king in our lives so the opposite is true just turn only for a moment to one john and chapter four because i think this is important for us to recognize and to see particularly when we've been talking about spiritual things and the work of the holy spirit and the work of demons too one john chapter four verses one uh through to three one through to three of one john four that's page one two two seven page one two two seven notice what john is saying here do your friends do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to

[21 : 49] see whether they are from god because many false prophets have gone out into the world he's saying they're clearly those evil spirits false spirits that are at work in the world and as christians we've got to discern and judge between them and we need to be careful because there are those that will deceive and come as prophets but are not from god verse two this is how you can recognize the spirit of god every spirit that acknowledges jesus christ has come in the flesh is from god but every spirit that does not acknowledge jesus is not from god it's the centrality of jesus christ jesus is lord is the marker stone is the the anvil as it were that uh that uh that we are to lay down as the solid truth we believe in jesus is lord means not only that we believe in to be equal with god because of course that incredible title lord which is the old testament yahweh is the word which speaks only of god it's his name so when we say jesus is lord we're not simply saying he's the master or he's sir or he's very important we're declaring him equal with god but also as we see here when we say jesus is lord we're taking that name jesus that human name given to him at his birth which means the lord saves the name by which he was known as a man and lived amongst us and as john says here every spirit that acknowledges jesus christ has come in the flesh is from god those who truly believe that he's god made man that historical person of jesus but it also means that we are saying that jesus is lord in that he is lord now not that he was lord in the past or was god but that he is lord he has risen from the dead and he is my lord and my savior so jesus lord is very very important it's a mark of the spirit of god where those who truly can say jesus is lord are christians and so the immediate litmus test in one sense for us dear friends is this can i say truly genuinely with my whole heart with with absolute certainty that jesus is lord the god who came into the world the god who took on my human nature the god who died in my place the god who rose again from the dead and lives today and the one that i recognize as the lord of my life before myself and before all others that's the test so to say jesus is lord as paul says here is only something the holy spirit can do we can't do it naturally because we cannot make ourselves christians we cannot become christians by our own power by our own decision we cannot be bullied into becoming a christian we cannot be coerced into becoming a christian except by the holy spirit of god faith and trust in him comes by the spirit and that's why of course when jesus meets with nicodemus back in john 3 this religious leader this good man he says to him you cannot see the kingdom of heaven until you are born again and he explains what he means by that he says later on the wind blows wherever it pleases you hear its sound but you cannot tell where it's coming from or where it's going to so it is with everyone born of the spirit the spirit of god must inhabit a person and give to them repentance and faith so that they can say jesus is lord and he's my lord and he's my god and when we worship

together dear friends when we come into church together when we sing hymns together are we truly singing hymns that are declaring that jesus is lord of this church and of my life because we can sing the most glorious hymns of wesley or watts or whoever it may be stuart town then we can sing them with all the gusto in the world with the best music in the world but unless the holy spirit as it were dwells within our hearts and we are singing them as unto the lord as worship and praise and the acknowledgement of who he is then it's all as stuff and nonsense and if we are praising god if we are worshiping him as lord of our lives in our meetings together are we by our actions and attitudes actually rejecting him as lord that's the problem here are we actually here because it serves our own pleasures it's so it honors us it makes us look good or feel good actually is it because we want that jesus should be lord of everything we do everything we say everything we are so that's the first test as it were that paul brings before them the spirit of god is present when people are with true heart with sincere faith declaring jesus is lord but also the holy spirit is at work when we see uh all things happening for the common good or for the good of all verses 4 to 11.

remember paul has been seeking to unite those divisions that are within the church divisions over as i say class slave and free rich and poor in fact divisions over male and female divisions over who's the best preacher or teacher and so on but actually he recognizes that there must be differences between us and that there are differences between us and that there are some differences which are for the good of all important differences which are actually a blessing to unite us rather than separate us and this is what he means when he talks about the gifts of the holy spirit given to us verses 4 to 6. notice how he uses the word different three occasions different kinds of gifts different kinds of service different kinds of working these all come from the spirit of god in fact you can see can't you if you look very clearly the trinity at being spoken of notice first of all verse 4 it's the spirit then verse 5 it's the lord christ then first 6 it's god there's the trinity isn't there again and again coming out of the scriptures father son and holy spirit each of them giving different kinds of gift service and work the wonderful thing dear friends is this that in the church of jesus christ we have the trinity working for us we have the whole godhead working here changing equipping and manifesting themselves and what is the purpose of this why is it that the godhead is working why is it that the holy spirit the lord jesus christ and god the father are giving and distributing differing gifts and abilities and jobs to each and every single member of the church is it so that we can all uh feel good about ourselves is it so that we can exalt one above the other no verse 7 now to each one the manifestation of the spirit is given for the common good for the blessing of the entire church the encouragement and help of every single one and so paul goes on from verse 8 and he lists various different types of gifts he doesn't list all of them but he gives a good scattering a good handful words of knowledge and uh uh faith and healing and miracles and prophecy and tongues and he says again at the end verse 11 all these are the work of one and the same spirit he distributes them to each one just as he determines you and i dear friends whoever we are whatever our christian experience whatever our age whatever our gender etc etc etc you have received a gift of god the holy spirit to serve and to work and to bring blessing to the whole church and there's no point you saying well i can't and i'm useless and i'm this and i'm that or i'm too old or i'm too young sorry that means that the bible is wrong put your hand up if you think the bible is wrong come on in let's see you of course we don't believe it's wrong we know it's right but we're afraid at times and we struggle at times as a church when we come together we are coming for the blessing of one another and god has given us gifts perhaps we're unaware of them perhaps we see them but we don't think well that can't be a gift it can't be a gift to do this or to do that that's just a just an everyday thing but why why can't it be a gift

we see later on when we get to chapter 14 all sorts of gifts administration as a gift helping as a gift god has gifted us and he's gifted us that we might be a blessing to each other am i using my gifts to the blessing of all the blessing of others am i using my gifts to build myself up and feel good about myself am i using my gifts only for those people i really really like in the church or is it actually for the common good and for all the temptation is to think of church a little bit like a drive-through at mcdonald's we just get what we want we don't we leave behind the other bits that we don't want but you see the what paul is saying here is that every single bit every single part is for the good of all and then we come then really to follow on in the conclusion of that it's obvious where we go from there because if we've all been given different gifts then it's clear that the all of us are to be involved in using those gifts things and so we go from chapter verse 12 and following the whole body is to be

active every part active and he uses this lovely illustration doesn't he from verse 12 of a body a human body we know that our human bodies are just one body but all sorts of bits and pieces as it were attached to the body that are part of the body our head our hands our legs our toes and so on the body of christ is the church that's what he tells us here in verse 27 christ is the head of the church he's the one who is the director of every other part of the body but every christian is a vital but different part of that body each has a special purpose each has a special ability each has a special place this is the wonder of what it is to be part of a church this is the glory this is the joy dear friends that you and i have entered into that we we we have been brought together not by accident not by chance not even by choice not by work we've been brought together by god and placed into this body in exactly the right order and exactly the right place to do exactly the right work that god wants us to do now of course wonderfully we became part of the body of christ when we were converted when we became a christian we became of the universal church the universal body because when we became a christian something marvelous happened verse 13 we were all baptized by one spirit as to form one body it's a spiritual unity it's not a unity because we all are related to one another not a unity because we all are from yorkshire or whitby or even from britain or ever it's a spiritual union it's a spiritual union that has brought us together jesus uses that wonderful picture of the vine and the branches doesn't he in john 15 again of those branches being added all of us connected to one another through christ we have no other connector connection apart from him and therefore if we are part of the body we're to honor every other part of the body church in corinth had that problem didn't it where it looked down upon some it thought of some gifts as being well unimportant unnecessary foolish even they saw some parts of the body as not having the right to use their gifts well your gifts aren't as important as my gifts and and and i want to use mine no you can't

use yours and so paul uses humor as it were to rebuke them verse 21 the eye cannot say to the hand i don't need you and the head cannot say to the feet i don't need you on the country those parts of the body that seem to be weak are indispensable he's following on from that wonderful little illustration earlier on where he he says where would the whole body be if it were just one eye what sort of body can you imagine the grotesque body like something out of a cartoon there's just an eye rolling down the street well it wouldn't be able to roll because it couldn't move because i haven't got any legs where would the sense of hearing be and so he goes on just one big hand have you ever seen the adams family with thing the hand it's just a disembodied hand and it walks around and does these things amazingly it hasn't got any eyes or ears but it can hear and it can see and it can activate itself but anyway that's just a fairy story sort of thing isn't it of course we know that my little i would be most upset if i lost my little finger wouldn't you it's important for scratching my ears and things like that no but every part is important everything is necessary but then they go on to say well there's those unmentionable parts of our bodies they don't really have a great deal of honor but paul says they do those parts of the body that are unrepresentable we treat with special honor there may be some people in the church of whom we can say we're embarrassed that's a shameful thing isn't it some members in this church we're embarrassed of we don't want to be associated with them because they smell or they this or they that and if we see them in the street and with with friends or other people who are not from the church we pretend we don't know them that's a dreadful thing isn't it is is that how we're meant to be of course not of course not actually the truth is what paul says this that those that are the shameful those are the ones that we should love the most the ones that we're a little bit embarrassed about are the ones we should pay special attention to special care those who don't really have a great deal of gifting they have gifts but but they they don't seem to be the exceptional gifts they're the ones we're to especially care for and care about you see when you become a christian everything's turned on its head it's actually turned the right way up we see things as god sees things when he looks on the body of his son the body of the church he sees something beautiful and we're supposed to see that too we would be lost without one another we would really be lost if we did not have every part of the body of this local church and we feel it we feel it of course when when dear folk leave us and move away because we need them no we don't need them because well who's going to do the dishes now and who's going to do that now but we need them because we know that they are vital to us and we are vital to them and this is what the church in corinth had lost sight of verse 27 you are the body of christ and each one of you is a part of it and god is placed in the church and he begins to give his list again of various

[39 : 52] types of gifts and so the question is to me and the question is to you dear friends this am i playing my part in this local church i want a spectator come in and i take the bits that i like i like the

singing and i like the uh the cup of tea afterwards and i like meeting my friends oh actually i'm coming what am i bringing oh i've got nothing to bring yes you have and can you bring a word of encouragement can you say to somebody how are you and then offer to pray for them of course we can and so many more things besides maybe you're not a hand maybe you're not a mouth or an eye or an ear maybe you are just a little finger or a little toe a little piggy on the end of the foot but you're important and you have a part to play and you're needed and so paul says yes whatever gifts we have let's thank god for them and let's seek for more gifts lord give me greater gifts he says there verse 31 eagerly desire the greatest gifts so that we can serve one another better so we can serve christ better so we can serve the church better so we can exalt jesus as lord better surely our prayer dear friends is this lord use me work through me here and now as you so choose let's sing together as we bring our time to a close we're going to sing number 384 really a hymn of wesley which picks up i think on this very theme of which we've been considering he says there in chapter two in sorry verse two move and actuate and guide various gifts to each divide placed according to thy will let us all our work fulfill let's stand and sing 384 now may the god of grace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our lord jesus that great shepherd of the sheep may he equip you with everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing to him through jesus christ to whom be the glory forever and ever amen you