

1 Corinthians #19
Overcoming Ignorance
1 Corinthians 12:1-3

Having dismissed the first part of his letter with the words, “[The rest will I set in order when I come,](#)” shows that Paul was aware that there were other things in Corinth that needed to be corrected. **Their party cliques and their divided opinions on many biblical matters were all rooted and grounded in their character flaws (as we saw in our last study).**

These things were affecting the life and the testimony of the church, and needed to be dealt with. But before he could do that, there were some pressing matters that were at the very heart and life of the church's existence, that had to be dealt with first, so he says, “[The rest I will deal with when I come.](#)”

The words “when I come” stand out. **You see, Paul had no definite plans to visit, he did not know when he could see them, but he intended to do so, and then he would deal with these other matters.**

As we have already seen, the first part of Paul's letter has been wholly corrective. From this point to the end, it is wholly constructive. The corrective section was intended, to deal with the disorderliness caused by the carnalities of the church, which were preventing the fulfillment of the church's function, because it was disrupting the fellowship of the body of Christ.

The reason that the church could no longer function as it should, and the reason that it has lost its testimony in the city of Corinth, is because of the disunity and the lack of fellowship. And the reason for this type of unChristlike activity in the church was their carnality.

You will remember that when Paul came to them, he could, not speak to them as unto spiritual but as unto carnal. They were dominated by the carnal side of their nature, living in a city given over to the material. And the reason for their disorder, broken fellowship, a lack of testimony, and the fulfillment of their function to reach men and women for the cause of Christ; could be summed up in these words, “[Ye are yet carnal.](#)”

“Now,” he says in verse 1, “[concerning spiritual gifts...](#)” **Having dealt with the things producing weakness in the church, Paul now turns to deal with the things pertaining to the church's true strength.** His method was to offer correction in light of their weakness, and he offered construction for their strength. So this great letter naturally falls into two parts. **To understand this new beginning, we will need to understand what Paul is saying here in these first three verses of chapter 12.**

Therefore, look with me once more at verse 1, “[Now concerning spiritual gifts...](#)” If you have a New Scofield Reference Bible, you will notice that the word “gifts” is printed in italics. **That simply means that the word was not in the original Greek text, but has been added by the translators to give sense, or to make a smoother translation. Very often it does just that. It certainly has its use; but many times it causes misunderstanding.** And in this particular passage of Scripture, the word “gifts” is very misleading.

What is the word? It is one word in the Greek, “pneumatikon,” (pnyoo-mat-ik-on) and literally translated, it means “spirituals.” We do not use that plural in the English and because of that, translators added the word “gift” or “gifts,” in order to explain the word. **But we do use another word, which is the exact, and that word is “spiritualities.”** That word indicates that which is heavenly rather than earthly, that which is of the spirit rather than that of the physical; that is “spiritualities.” Therefore, Paul says, “Now concerning the spiritualities.” **In this verse, the word is preceded in the Greek by the definite article, “ton.”** So it is *not* just “concerning spiritualities,” but literally Paul says, “[Now concerning the spiritualities.](#)”

You may be thinking, “What does all of this have to do with us?” **Simply this - Paul was not just writing about “spiritual gifts.”** But the fact of the matter is that the subject of “gifts” is dealt with later as one of the “spiritualities.” You see, a church cursed with carnalities, needed to return to “spiritualities.” **The things of the spirit, rather than the things of the flesh. You see, the church of the living God is not a “flesh organization,” it is a “spiritual organism.”** So this opening sentence is a remarkable one, “Now concerning the spiritualities.”

In order for us to have clear thinking on what Paul is saying to each of us, look with me at the whole section. From chapter 12 to 15:57, he is dealing with the “spiritualities.” Then, chapter 16 is an illustrative chapter. **Taking the whole of this section, look with me at the things Paul deals with that he calls “spiritualities.”** There are three main matters that he deals with that we must understand if we are going to “rightly divide the word of truth.”

First of all, he deals with the unifying Spirit of God in chapter 12. And at the conclusion of that chapter, he says in verse 31, “[But covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.](#)” **Secondly, he shows us the spirituality and the unfailing law of love, described and applied in chapters 13 and 14.** And he closes with these words in verse 13 of chapter 13, “[And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.](#)” **And lastly, he set all the church's life and service in the light of a larger life that will be realized only in the resurrection.** And he gives us these words of assurance in

chapter 15:51, "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

Therefore, in light of what we have seen, we can see that the "spiritualities" with which Paul is speaking of here, are the unifying Spirit, the unfailing law of love, and finally, the ultimate triumph of the resurrection. Therefore, in chapter 15:58 he says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." And with that statement he ends the section dealing the "spiritualities."

The things Paul had to set in order and correct were, first divisions; secondly, carnality; and, thirdly, difficulties arising in the mind of the church. Divisions are made impossible by the unifying Spirit. The unfailing law of love makes the carnality of selfishness impossible. Difficulties are all solved in light of the resurrection. So the "spiritualities" absolutely correct the "carnalities."

To see the mind of God in this epistle, look at chapter 1:9 where he says, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." And now look at verse 58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." **The fundamental truth of chapter one is reinforced in the final appeal of chapter 15, and that is simply this - realizing that your fellowship is with Christ, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the ministry that God has called you to do. And in order to accomplish that goal, we have to correct that carnalities, and live in the power of the spiritualities.** In other words, if we are ever going to live in victory, then we must discipline the flesh and walk in the Spirit.

Look once more at verse 1, "Now concerning spiritualities, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." **The subject is "spiritual matters" having to do with the function and ministry of the fellowship of believers.** Notice the strong words of Paul concerning this very important subject, "I would not have you ignorant." Literally Paul says, "I would not have you not knowing." **And the Greek word here is "agnoeo" (ag-no-eh-o).** It is from this word that the also get the word "agnostic" which means exactly the same thing as "ignoramus." **Paul did not want them to be ignorant, unintelligent, or uninformed. And yet, that is exactly where they were.** And may I say to you tonight, that that is exactly where most of us are when it comes to the "spiritualities" and "spiritual gifts."

Paul's indication is that there is no excuse for spiritual ignorance, because we have the Word of God, the perfect law of liberty, a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway. All Scripture is inspired and is profitable. The Holy

Spirit wants to be the Teacher of every child of God, and every child of God possesses the Holy Spirit.

Notice, in verse 2, how Paul reminds them of their past ignorance because of their relationship idols, "Ye know that ye were Gentiles (non-Christian), carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led." Paul reminds them that the reason that they were "ignorant" was because they were serving "those dumb idols." **Literally those voiceless gods, idols, images, shapes; those things you put into the place of God.** He is saying in essence, "How can you expect to be intelligent, when you were following some dumb idol?"

But what does that have to do with you and me? Simply this, the main reason that we are so ignorant of spiritual matters, is that the god of our lives is not the God of this Book. Child of God, spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and unless we are willing to come to the place of allowing God to be the God of our lives, then we will never see any real spiritual awakening in our nation, because there will be no spiritual awakening in our churches.

I want you to see how Paul underlines this Great truth in verse 3, "Wherefore, I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." In John 16:12-:15 Jesus said to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Nevertheless, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."

The message of Paul, and Jesus, is that the things of God can only be understood and appreciated as the result of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit, and the Spirit only, Who is able to interpret the deep conviction of the Lordship of Christ to the human soul. It is the Spirit and the Spirit only Who can so interpret spiritual matters and bring the human soul into the position of agreeing with the fellowship of believers.

It is an easy thing to come to church, and get caught up in the excitement and emotion of what is happening, to walk down some isle, join some church, and say, "Jesus is my Lord." **But is it true?** Jesus Himself has reminded us in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in the name have cast out demons? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye

that work iniquity.” You see, we can take His name, and confess the fact that He is Lord, and sing with great gusto: “All hail the power of Jesus' name, Let angels prostrate fall.” **But it is not just the words of one’s mouth that makes Jesus the Lord of your life; it is the conviction of the soul.** And that can come only by the power of the Holy Spirit.

You see, Paul is saying that to have Jesus as Lord, is something that comes from a heart-felt conviction. It includes acknowledging His as Lord by obeying Him, by surrendering my will to His will for my life. It includes a change in attitudes in order that my life might reflect His life. **In other words, the Christian life is much more than just lip service, it involves life service.**

But why does Paul begin this chapter concerning "spiritual gifts" with this message concerning the Lordship of Christ? The reason is simple - unless we allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us concerning the Person and the Work of Christ, we will never allow Him to speak to us concerning the need for "spiritual gifts" in the church.

Therefore, my question to you is this - Because of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, have you ever ask Jesus Christ to come into you life and to forgive you of your sins, and to make you a Christian?

If you are saved, are you truly allowing Jesus Christ to be the Lord of your life, as reflected in your obedience, by your attitudes, and by your service?