

Escaping the Protestant Dark Age

Andy Young – Session 1

Exercising Spiritual Gifts in Love: The Body as a Metaphor

I usually have trouble trying to decide on what my sessions are going to be on for these conferences. Those of you who are familiar with the Tuesday Night Bible study endeavor, you know that I am very comfortable taking a book of the bible and just methodically working through it like we did with our Acts study. I am not very comfortable with topical studies because you run into the danger of proof-texting. (stacking verses to support your topic). And I think I explained that somewhat at the beginning of my first session at the 2014 conference a couple of years ago.

Some time ago when Paul and Susan and I were first getting into the planning stages for this year's conference, Paul was wanting to go with this theme of coming out of a Protestant dark age. This dark age has been characterized by fear. This protestant gospel keeps men under condemnation, and so as a result you have millions of Christians walking around in constant fear that they are going to do something to mess up their salvation because they are still worried about condemnation, even though Romans 8:1 PLAINLY states that there is therefore now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Rather than living lives characterized by fear, the life of the believer should be characterized by love. So with this "awakening" as it were, as we try to help believers come out of this dark age, what we need to be doing as believers, as we seek to disciple others, as we seek to build up each other and equip each other, we need to help people overcome this fear of condemnation and help each other learn how to love. I really think if we spent more time, our time, our effort, our energy, if we focused on loving others there won't be any time to think about fear.

A few months ago I wrote an article for PPT, on 1 Corinthians 13. It was basically a word study on the definition of love. And later on if you want you can go back and look that up. But as I was trying to decide on a topic that would fit in with the theme for this year's conference I decided that I would take what I wrote for that article and expand on it. Because what Paul is dealing with in chapter 13 is not just a treatise on love. Chapter 13 is great study on its own, but there is so much more to be learned in the larger context, and so I want us to be able to see where this definition of love fits in, what is Paul's larger message that he's trying to communicate. What exactly is Paul addressing here in this section of 1 Corinthians?

So I think this will work, because it allows me to be able to speak on a particular topic, but at the same time we will go through an exegetical study of a larger passage, and so we will avoid the risk of "proof-texting".

To put it in a nutshell, this section of 1 Corinthians is actually about spiritual gifts. And while chapter 13 is a wonderful treatise on love, it is really about how believers are supposed to use their gifts. This topic entails all of chapters 12 through 14, and we are going to go through all of it.

So here's how I'm going to do this. I don't intend to get bogged down in a detailed look at each of the gifts. If we wanted to do that we could probably spend months on that kind of study, and frankly I don't think the canon of scripture we have is an exhaustive list of spiritual gifts. I really think that there are other gifts that some believers possess that aren't listed in scripture. And I could give you various reasons for that.

And as we go through this study we are going to see Paul discusses the gift of tongues at length. Because of that, I think it would be helpful in our study if we began with a review of tongues. So before we get into 1 Corinthians, lets begin by going to Acts 2.

Pop quiz. Who knows what is recorded for us in Acts 2? Pentecost. Anyone know what Pentecost means? (50). (brief summary of what happened in the upper room).

They were filled with the Holy Ghost (furnished)

And as a result of being furnish with the Holy Ghost, what happened? Verse 4

"...[they] began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Here is the first reference to what many call gift of tongues. Now I using the King James, and it is translated "tongues"

γλωσσα – "glos-sah" – the tongue. By implication, a language. Glossary. Not some mystical, spirit-language. I would assert that this means an actual literal spoken language. There is more evidence that supports this later on in Acts 2, but I want you to look at this other word.

utterance – **αποφθεγγομαι** – "ap-off-THENG-oh-my" – to speak forth plainly and distinctly

"As the Spirit gave them the ability to enunciate plainly!"

Do you see here, the implication is that these disciples were speaking a language that was meant to be understood by those who heard it, because it was plain and distinct. And later on when we get to chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians we'll see this notion of plain and distinct come up again.

What else do we learn about tongues from this passage? Jump down to verse 6

"Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? ...we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." ~ Acts 2:6-11

Once again we see in this passage the word "tongue". At least in my KJV I have the word "tongue". I want you to see something here. This is not the same word that was used in verse 4. This is not "glossa", it's a different word. The word here in the Greek is

διαλεκτος – "dee-ah-lek-tos", dialect, more specifically, vernacular. Now what do I mean by that? What is vernacular? Well let's think about it this way. We all speak English here right?

I was born and raised in a suburb of Buffalo, NY. I moved to Columbus...I didn't really think I talked much differently from people around me.

- Accent

- word usage (use visual aids)

artificially flavored carbonated beverage

grocery bag

athletic shoes

(wife in Australia) cookie/biscuit

- idioms and figures of speech.

in the bathroom/in the toilette

loo/closet

All these things are not just unique to a particular language but also to various regions within the same country that speak the same language. So this is important to keep in mind with what we see happening here in Jerusalem on Pentecost. You have thousands of people who have made this pilgrimage. These are Hellenistic Jews who live in various regions all over Asia minor and Persia and northern Africa as a result of the dispersion following the Jewish captivity in Assyria and Babylon, and they have made this trek to Jerusalem to observe Pentecost. And suddenly they hear native Jews speaking in their home language. Not just speaking their language. See, when you learn a foreign language, it's one thing to learn the words and

the grammar and sentence structure. But what most people have a hard time getting right is the accent. You can tell right away when you hear someone talk, if they have an accent that gives it away, they're not from here.

But these Jews said, these men from Jerusalem, they sound just like us! We hear them in our own dialect, our own vernacular. The same accent. They sound just like a native speaker. They sound just like someone who spoke this language all their life. That's not something everyone can master. But when the spirit filled these disciples in the upper room, they began to speak and they sounded just like those from their native countries. I think this is yet one more point that supports this idea of an actual human language. It certainly was plain and it certainly was distinct. Distinct enough that these men were amazed that Galileans could speak and sound just like them!

So we have established that the gift of tongues from the very beginning was a real language meant to be understood by the hearer. In fact, they said it again in verse 11. We hear them in our own tongue. It's the same word again, "dialektos". And just like any other spiritual gift, it was given to men for the purpose of building up the body of Christ and equipping believers to do their work of the ministry. Ephesians 4:11, 12 tells us that. And we see that very thing happening in Acts 2. When the disciples were speaking in tongues they were preaching the wonderful works of God! They were giving the gospel, in languages that were foreign to them, but could be understood by those who heard it.

But tongues also served a more specific purpose. Being a spiritual gift, it was to be used for edifying the body, but Peter explained in Acts 2 that this gift of tongues was a sign. And it was a sign specifically to the Jews. And I won't get into it here, but Peter goes on to cite Joel 2 and he says that this sign of tongues was part of the fulfillment of the Joel 2 prophecy. The Jews would see this sign of tongues and it would be an indication to them that what was happening was authentic. It stated to the Jews that being born again by faith in the name of Jesus Christ was a real thing.

This was vitally important to understand because when we fast-forward to Acts 10, and we have this account with Cornelius, and we have this first account of a mass conversion of Gentiles. And what happened to them. Acts 10 says while Peter was yet speaking, the people listening were persuaded, and they believed and they were born again. How do we know that? Because THEY started speaking in tongues! Up to this point the Jews thought that being born again was a Jewish thing. They still didn't really understand the concept of the New Man that would be comprised of both Jew and Gentile. So this was a major lesson for Peter and the rest of these Jews present at Cornelius' house. They see Gentiles all of sudden speaking and tongues, and now this sign has relevance for them as well. God said, see, just like when this happened to you guys, the same thing is happening with them. And Peter and the rest say, wow, so I guess God means to bring salvation to the Gentiles too, because now they have the Holy Spirit just like we do!

So this gift of tongues was important because it was a sign that indicated outwardly to everyone who witnessed it that indeed this person was truly born again. But! And let me emphasize this, it's purpose as a sign was meant for the Jews.

So now we finally come to 1 Corinthians 12, and this gift of tongues comes up again. Because it appears as if there was some confusion. The Corinthian believers were a confused bunch weren't they? And I'm not going to take the time here to try and get into the details of what Paul is responding to. This letter is a response. It is reactive and not proactive. Paul is reacting to things that have been brought to his attention. And I will go so far as to say that this is true of not just Paul's letters, but all of the letters of the NT. The only exception might be the letters Paul wrote to Timothy. But what we see throughout 1 Corinthians is Paul attempting to correct wrong thinking or wrong teaching, and ultimately wrong behavior in these assemblies. The first part he's dealing with a man having an inappropriate relationship with his step-mother. In the chapter just prior to our passage, he's dealing with their unruliness when they fellowship in general and observing the Lord's Table in particular.

When we come to chapter 12, you can see there is a dramatic change of subject. Paul puts a period at the end of chapter 11. Ok, I'm done with that subject, let's move on to the next issue. (checklist) And that

issue has to do with spiritual gifts. So like I said, I don't want to get into the details of speculating about what exactly Paul is responding to or more specifically, what was communicated to Paul, you know, what was the issue that the Corinthian assemblies brought to Paul's attention. The beginning of chapter 12 gives a little indication, but as we go through this we come to learn that it has something to do with spiritual gifts in general and tongues in particular.

So Paul starts out here giving kind of an overview about the function of spiritual gifts, particularly in regard to this idea of a body. Let's read this together. And this is a rather long chunk of scripture here, but let me just read through this with you because this is going to establish our context.

1 Corinthians chapter 12, and we'll start with verse 12.

¹²For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. ¹³For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵If the foot shall say, "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body;" is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶And if the ear shall say, "Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body;" is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

¹⁸But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. ¹⁹And if they were all one member, where were the body? ²⁰But now are they many members, yet but one body. ²¹And the eye cannot say unto the hand, "I have no need of thee:" nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²²Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: (²³and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. ²⁴For our comely parts have no need). But God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: ²⁵that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. ²⁶And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

This is Paul's reasoning. He's using a physical body as a metaphor to describe the Body of Christ. These are the assumptions, the premise, the starting point. Let's assume this to be true. He's using an example that everyone is familiar with. He is establishing reality. People can relate to this because they can observe this. That's how we organize reality. We observe how things work and we come up with assumptions. So we have these assumptions about a physical body, and then Paul says, well, this is how the spiritual body works as well, and then we take action accordingly.

So let's ask ourselves some questions.

How is the Body of Christ like a physical body?

- A body is one.

Now I don't want to digress into a discussion about is a body a collective or is it an individual, or get into this argument about was Paul promoting collectivism or the notion of the destruction of the individual for the benefit of the group. Because that is not the point here at all. And this passage should not be used as a proof text for either side of that argument. This is a metaphor. It is a figure of speech used to aid in the understanding of truth.

¹³For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free;

This isn't the only time Paul has used this kind of language to describe believers. If you go back to one of the things I talked about at last year's conference, you remember I spoke about the believer's identity, and how a believer is part of the body. We looked at this passage in Ephesians 2:11-17.

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ,

*being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, **who hath made both one**, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain **one new man**, so making peace; And that he might **reconcile both unto God in one body** by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” ~ Ephesians 2:11-17*

So a body is one. It is whole. It functions as one. But even though it functions as one whole...

- A body is made up of parts.

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

²⁰*But now are they many members, yet but one body*

This next point I think is most important because this is where we start to get into the meat of the passage.

- All the parts are necessary!

God put all the parts together to make the body work properly.

If there is no nose, the body can't smell. If there's no eye, the body can't see.

Remember these things, because we're going to come back to this in a minute. But here is one other thing I want to mention before we go on to the next point. A body with a missing part is still a body, but its ability to function is hindered. Let me say that again...

Next point.

- The parts are not envious of each other!

This ties in with the previous point.

Just because a foot is not a hand doesn't mean it's not a body part. The foot doesn't go around wishing that it was a hand.

Just because an arm is not a leg doesn't mean it's not a body part. The arm doesn't go around wishing it were a leg.

Taking this point a little further.

A body that is nothing but arms is not much of a body. Ok. Unless you're an octopus, a body that's all arms is pretty useless. Or all feet, or all hands. If your body is all hands, it can't see or hear or taste or smell or run or jump or speak.

So remember how we just said that a body that is missing a part is hindered in function, so also is a body that has too many of a particular part. It's not going to be very effective at what it was designed to do.

Now, Paul says that believers are part of a body. The Body of Christ. The New Man. What is this spiritual body designed to do? Go out and make disciples. Or think Ephesians 4:12, the work of the ministry. This body has a job to do. And just like a physical body, the spiritual body is made up of parts, and those parts are put in place by God to carry out a particular function that enables the body to do its job.

The functions of the physical body parts are analogous to spiritual gifts. Every person who is added to the Body of Christ is given a particular gift, as God sees fit, that will best help the Body to accomplish its job. And Paul lists some of these gifts. And this list is by no means exhaustive. We can look in some other places in the NT and find other gifts listed that aren't mentioned here. But there is this list in starting in verse 8. Words of wisdom, words of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

Now a little later on in the chapter he is actually going to prioritize these, so we'll get to the in a minute. But the point is, God has given different gifts to every believer. Not everyone has the same gift. AND, no one has every gift. I think that's important to notice. What if everyone had every gift? We wouldn't need each other would we. There would be no need for us to fellowship together. You know what fellowship

means, right? The Greek word is koinania. It means having in common. What do believers have in common? Do we all have the same gift? No. We are all part of the same body. That's what we have in common. We're all part of the Body of Christ. And for the body to function, we need to come together from time to time for fellowship, and edify each other by exercising our gifts. When we come together as a body, and the whole body is working as one, and every part is doing what it's supposed to do, every part of the body grows. It's edified.

More than that, the whole body grows. We are edified to do the work of the ministry, and that is to go out and make disciples. We go out and give people the gospel of the Kingdom, and they hear it, and they are persuaded, and they believe, and then they are added to the body, and they receive a gift so that they can in turn edify and be edified. **Mutual edification of the body**, and they grow and mature, and then they go out and give the gospel, and it goes on and on and on and the pattern repeats itself over and over.

This by the way, is God's method for church growth. Notice there is nothing here about a building program, or a week of special services, or an evangelical outreach committee, or a youth mission retreat, or inviting your lost friends to church. It's the body that goes out and finds them. The body gives the message. This is by the way the one task that is common to every believer despite whatever happens to be their particular dispensation of gifting. This is not a task only for pastors. This is not a task only for evangelists. This is not a task only for specially trained missionaries going to a particular country. This is the task of EVERY believer. And when the whole body is working together, when everyone is exercising their specific gift, each member is edified, and EVERYONE has everything they need to go out and make disciples themselves!

Now I got off on sort of a rabbit trail there with that there, but you can tell I am passionate about this. So where does love fit into all of this? Well another point that Paul makes about the body, and I touched on this before is that every part is vital. Paul acknowledges in this passage that there are some parts that are of greater importance than others. Now I need to be careful here because I don't want to give the wrong idea. We understand that every part is important because it is part of the body. We understand that the heart is more important than the pinky toe. Right? We can live without our pinky toe, but we can't live without our heart. That being said, none of us would ever say, I don't need my pinky toe so I'm just going to cut it off right now.

But Paul goes on to say that those parts of our body that seem insignificant, we take special care of. Your pinky toe might not seem to be all that important, but have any of you ever smashed your pinky toe? If you have a broken toe, you know it with every step you take. It's there. Or how about this. You're pounding a nail, and the hammer misses and you hit your thumb. What is the first thing you do? Other than scream a few choice words that believers would never utter... what do we do? We do this (demonstrate). Notice, that when one part of the body hurts, other parts of the body come to its aid. And also as a body, we would never hit our thumb on purpose. I tell that to my kids. Kids do that, they can often get into the practice of cutting each other down and calling names. But I tell them, hey we're a family. We're all part of a body. Why are you trying to hurt your body? Why are you hitting your thumb with a hammer on purpose?

When one member hurts, the whole body hurts. And conversely, when one member is praised or honored, the whole body rejoices with it. What affects one member affects the whole body, whether positively or negatively. He made this same point in Romans

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."
~ Romans 12:15

This is love. Now Paul doesn't come right out and call this love. He's going to develop that in chapter 13. But these are the points he makes.

This is love:

- Recognizing that we are all part of the same body
- That we all have a particular function (gift)
- Each member's gift is important to helping the body grow
- Each member's gift is important to helping the body do its job

- I should not be envious of another member's gift
- I should be exhorting other members to use/develop their gifts.

Now Paul begins to address the specific issue. The problem is that the Corinthians weren't doing this. They weren't showing love when it came to exercising spiritual gifts. Go back to our passage in 1 Corinthians 12, and go to verse 27. Paul makes the connection here for us in this passage. Paul draws this conclusion that we've already discussed. Just like a physical body, believers are members of Christ's Body. Look at verse 27. and we'll read to the end of the chapter.

27Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 28And God hath set some in the assembly, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31But [you] covet earnestly the best [better] gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

Ok, so there's the connection. Now Paul has already given us a list of gifts up in verses 8-10. But notice what he does here. He prioritizes them. Remember we made that point that some gifts were more important than others. Some part of the body were more "comely" than others, but that doesn't mean we despise those parts that seem less important. We don't cut them off and say we don't need them. So Paul prioritizes them for us, in order of importance. Apostles, then prophets, then teachers, then miracles, then healings, then helps (Tabitha, Acts 9), then governments (Latin derivative, "pilotage", leadership/administration), then tongues.

Notice that tongues is listed last in priority, below all the other gifts. And we won't see this now, not until we get to chapter 14, but Paul makes the case that tongues is a minor gift. It's not even the most important one. It serves a purpose, but when we get to chapter 14, Paul states that there is another gift that is more important than tongues. So there is a priority of importance.

Then next he draws another parallel. Remember how we said that if you have a body that is nothing but arms, it is not going to be a very useful body. And so Paul says here, is everyone an apostle? Is everyone a prophet? And so forth. The question is, in this assembly, does everyone have the same gift? Are you all the same body part? No, obviously no. It's a rhetorical question, and Paul uses this argument very effectively. To the extent that here is his accusation. Why are you all trying to covet the same gift?

That is the point in verse 31. Now we have a bad translation here in the King James. For sake of comparison let's look at verse 31 in some different translations.

(KJV) "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."

(ESV) "But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way."

(NASB) "But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way."

For the most part they all translate this verse the same way, but I think the point is lost in the poor translation. Two things we need to point out. You have this expression "covet earnestly" which in the Greek is the word "dzay-LAW-oh", which means to be zealous over. This word is in the present tense imperative mood. And we know that an imperative is a command. So in the first part of the verse the Corinthians are being commanded to do something. What is that? Be zealous for the best gifts. The word best is also mistranslated, because the word in the Greek is the comparative form and not the superlative form. It should be translated "better" or "greater".

I think the God's Word translation actually has the best rendering of this verse

(GW) "You only want the better gifts, but I will show you the best thing to do."

Now there are two ways you can understand this. Since we are dealing with a command, the question then is who is giving the command. Since it is Paul writing, one could assume that Paul is commanding them. So you could understand it this way:

I, Paul, command you to be zealous for the better gifts.

But what if someone else is commanding them instead. What if we understood the verse this way?

You are commanded to be zealous for the better gifts.

Notice the tense hasn't changed. It's still present tense. But now there is a different implication. And this seems to be the source of the problem that Paul is addressing. They were being taught in these assemblies that they need to be zealous for better gifts, better than the ones they may have already been given. And in the context of the whole passage, and that runs all the way through chapter 14, it seems like they were coveting tongues. It would appear that there was a teaching going around these assemblies that, well yes you may have a particular gift, but you all should be speaking tongues, and so they were all going around coveting tongues. To the point of jealousy. Which is not...love. They all wanted something that not all of them had. For whatever reason.

And later on when we get to chapter 14, Paul is going to say, look, if you're going to covet after a gift, you should covet prophecy. Because prophesy is more important because more people in the assembly can be edified by it. Now, not that Paul was condoning coveting ANY gift, because clearly here at the end of chapter 12 he's rebuking them. But hypothetically speaking, if you are going to covet a gift, why are you coveting an inferior one. It's almost sarcasm.

Paul says you are not showing love because you are not interested in gifts for the sake of how it will edify the body. You want this because you think it is somehow superior, or maybe that it is indicative of your spiritual state. Which incidentally is the error that Charismatics make. And look at Paul's final statement at the end of verse 31. Let me show you a more excellent way. Let me show you a better way. Let me teach you about love. Let me show you why it is important to have a proper view regarding spiritual gifts. And he launches into this fantastic treatise on the definition of love. And that is what we will look at in the next session.