

Kurios

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1 Corinthians 12:1-7

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You know, perspective changes everything. The way we see things makes all the difference in the world. For example, a man sat down in a restaurant and asked the waitress what the daily special was. She replied, "Boiled tongue." "Boiled tongue!" he said. "That's disgusting! There's no way that I'd ever eat anything that's been in a cow's mouth. Just give me two eggs over easy, some link sausage, and a glass of milk instead!"

Um, yea, perspective can make all the difference in the world. Take, for instance, what was happening at the Corinthian Church. These former pagans had become saints as a result of their faith in the promises of Christ (see chapter 1). They suddenly found within themselves the ability to understand things they could never understand before (see chapter 2). As we learned last week these Christians were reaching out even to the temple prostitutes, and through them, lives were being changed (see chapter 11). But they lacked a proper perspective due mostly to their spiritual immaturity. They began to embrace the idea that one Spiritual Gift was superior to another, that they deserved praise because of their Spiritual Abilities, and that God should be grateful for their service.

I find it interesting that instead of jumping into a discussion about Spiritual Gifts, Paul lays out three foundational truths. And any discussion about Spiritual Gifts must be preceded with this lesson. (Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-7) Paul begins his reply by saying, "You want to talk about Special Abilities? Fine, but let's get one thing straight. They come from God, they are for God, and they belong to God".

*"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit."*¹ (verse 4). Any gift or talent we may have has come from God. The truth is a person is not a product of chance. You are not born behind the eyes of God who then one day turns around and sees you standing there and thinks, "Hum, what can I do with this guy"? God actually had something in mind when you were formed. *"I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you*

¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (1 Co 12:4). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

as my prophet to the nations."² (Jeremiah 1:5). You are who you are for a reason. And even though your gifts and talents are not the same as someone else's, they have still come from God. So don't ever start thinking too highly of yourself, because you are who you are by the hand of God.

*"And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord."*³ (verse 5). You have been given these gifts and talents by God for God to use as He sees fit. *"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."*⁴ (Philippians 2:13) Actually, the reason God has gifted you differently than others is because there are many different things that He wants to accomplish. God has crafted you with a particular ministry in mind, and He crafted the next person with something else in mind. But because you have a whole different set of gifts and talents, there will be different perspectives of what matters most. So you need to keep in mind that although you may not serve in the same capacity nor have the same passions as the next person, what both of you do is for God.

*"There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons."*⁵ (Verse 6). You must realize that these gifts belong to God in the first place. It's just that the effects of some gifts have a tendency to be easily seen, while others go unnoticed. Whether your gift is quite obvious or not, it's easy to forget where that gift came from in the first place. And when a person forgets who owns the gift, they have a tendency to use that gift in any way they see fit. Some use it for their own glory. Others don't use their gift at all. So it's important to remember that God owns these gifts; it's just that He has granted them to you as a result of grace (*Charismata*). And since they belong to God, He does expect you to use them. He is not pleased when you allow that gift or talent to go to waste.

Like so many young Christians (people new to the faith) these believers still had a problem understanding what it means to call Jesus "Lord" (*Kurios* - koo/ree/os). In their pride and arrogance, some actually believed themselves to be so superior, that they literally asked Jesus to speak a curse against someone (it was

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

³*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (1 Co 12:5). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁴*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (Php 2:13). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁵*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (1 Co 12:6). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

apparently common practice to speak a curse toward someone in the name of a Greek god. A tablet found in Athens reads “Hermes of the underworld, grant heavy curses”⁶ The phrase “Jesus is cursed” can be translated “Speak a curse Jesus” - anathema Jesus. In light of the divisions in this church, it is possible that those with one set of gifts were asking Jesus to curse those believers who had another.). So, Paul reminds these Corinthian believers that “special abilities” and gifts come from God, they are for God, and they belong to God. But most of all “*A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.*”⁷ (verse 7).

If you have called Jesus Savior, you have received grace. As a result of grace, you have been granted a Special Ability (Charismata). It is not yours. It belongs to God. And His desire is to work through that gift; that special ability. You also have certain skills and talents. A person of the world may think they own them, but a Christian needs to understand that even these skills and talents were granted by God. So when a Christian calls Jesus Lord (*Kurios*) they are giving Him supreme authority. To call Jesus Lord is to surrender all your skills, talents, and abilities. You lay them at His feet, and you become His servant; His slave. You exist to do His will and His work. But please remember that so has the Christian in the next pew.

The problem that plagued the Corinthian Church still exists today. Even today some people divide over Special Abilities, skills or talents. We look down upon those who have been gifted differently than we have, and we make no room for them in our tiny little box. We roll our eyes when someone is passionate about some ministry that we think is a waste of time. Some still don’t know what it means to call Jesus Lord. They use these special abilities for their own glory and honor or never use them at all. Still today people have forgotten what it means to call Jesus Lord (*Kurios*). To Him we surrender all. To Him we give our life. We lay all that we are at the feet of our Good Shepherd. We don’t know why He has gifted us in this way. We don’t know how our service will benefit the Kingdom. But we must remember that what we do is for His glory and honor. He is the Shepherd, and we are the flock.

⁶ Professor Christopher A. Faraone – *Ancient Greek Love Magic* © 1999, Harvard university Press

⁷ Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.