



1. USING YOUR SPECIAL ABILITIES

“Do I have any?”

12 July, 2020

Please click on text in **RED** to listen to music or join in singing on YouTube.
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Welcome Church! and Welcome to Worship!

What a beautiful day to enjoy God's blessings! Greet each other (responsibly of course!) and praise God in your thoughts and words! We are already in mid-July and the Deacon's are planning and looking forward to a "new-normal" of worship services starting as soon as feasible and practicable.

Having spent four weeks studying The Pursuit of Godliness, which is the main aim of the life of a Christian, preparing us for eternity in the presence of our Holy God (*difficult to imagine eternity! Will we get bored? What is the excitement that will keep us going? ...*), we start on a three week series of "Using God's Gifts Entrusted to YOU!".

Pause and focus your hearts and minds on the Lord, our Father God. Recall how He has taken care of you this past week.

LISTEN **Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place**

PRAYER

Loving Lord, Gracious God, Merciful Master and Faithful Father. You are all that I can never be. Knowing this and acknowledging it frees me to be the person You have made me to be, and I draw on all that you are to make me whole!

I come to you this morning, gathered with all whom you have called by Name, to quench my thirst, to nourish my hunger, and to give me rest from my toil.

I also joyfully join with all Your people, here and everywhere, to praise You for ALL you have done for me, protecting me through the night, and nourishing me through the day.

Teach me to worship you with joy, here and now, as it is done in Heaven. **AMEN**

HYMN **Christ Triumphant Ever Reigning** **306**

PRAYER for Our World

God is our safe place and our strength. He is always our help when we are in trouble. So we will not be afraid, even if the earth is shaken and the mountains fall into the centre of the sea, even if its waters go wild with storm and the mountains shake with its action.. [Psalm 46:1-2]

Loving Father, we know that everything is under Your sovereign control. In your great mercy, we ask You contain this new coronavirus from continuing to spread. Give leaders of nations, managers of people, Doctors, Nurses and all who give of themselves to comfort and heal people, Your wisdom and knowledge to do what is right and humane.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. [Philippians 4:6]

Gracious God. Banish all fear, especially the fear of death; Teach us to trust You and Your promises and empower us to boldly declare the power of Your Name.

You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it! [John 14:13-14]

Merciful Master, there seems to be no end to all kinds of disasters creating refugees, poverty, lack of education, and disempowerment of large populations of people. We pray for all who work among such people, and ask you sustain them, that their work is not in vain. Remind them, *Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.* [Matthew 25:40]

Receive these our prayers for this Your world. **AMEN**

READING

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

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PRAYER for our Church (Let's make this a daily prayer for our Church)

God of Eternity, present among us here and now. This Church is your dwelling place in this community, planted by those who heard You, obeyed You and acted as You enabled. May we be such people, listening and acting as you build Your Church in this place.

Teach us to encounter you everyday through Your Word that we may:

Speak wisdom in love, and declare Your Truth with humility

Care with genuine empathy for the community in which we live

Draw people to You as peacemakers in Your Kingdom, and

Make space for those who need to escape from the tumult of their lives, and meet You.

Then let the empty Cross declare our reconciliation with You, accomplished by Jesus the Christ, our Lord! **AMEN**

HYMN

Spirit of God, Unseen as the Wind

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PRAYER for Our Community

Father. We remember by name ... those in our community who are under medical care, convalescing, receiving treatment and resting from an ordeal. We remember by name... those among us who continue to shield themselves from this horrible virus, those who have urgent needs we are unaware of. We pray for those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries, praising you for their celebration of each milestone in life, which is a gift from you. Continue to encourage us as a Church to live the life Jesus told us to, faithfully as His Church. **AMEN**

HYMN

Breathe on me Breath of God

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MESSAGE

Paul has been in extended dialogue with the church at Corinth on a number of questions they brought to him, all contemporary issues in their time; those coming into the Christian faith wanted to know the implications of such issues in their day-to-day lives. In chapter 7:1 he writes, *Now concerning the matters about which you wrote (on marriage and sexuality)...*; later

in v.25 he writes, *Now concerning the person to whom you are engaged to be married...*; in 8:1 he engages in their *concern for food offered to idols*. Later in chapter 16 (1 & 12) he addresses their concerns about taking *collection for the saints* (not people who have “achieved” Holiness (which is not possible), rather everyone who is focussed on, and trying hard to live a Holy life, showing the image of God in them), and finally a specific concern for *our brother Apollos*.

In chapter 12, Paul engages with the Church referring to *your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives and I don't want you to misunderstand this (v.1)*. The Church would have written to him asking for clarification on a matter that was bothering and dividing them. The choice of words describing the issue as **they** saw it, led Paul to start his reply, *I don't want you to misunderstand this...* and the eloquent Paul puts the issue in context - *what you are talking about is in reality, the special abilities (ONLY) the (Holy) Spirit gives*.

Spiritual Gifts has been a hot topic since modern day missions began with Pentecost, focussing on the **visible** gift of speaking in languages (tongues). Paul takes the Church on a journey, starting with the time *when you were led astray and swept along in worshipping mute and speechless idols*. We are gifted with God's Spirit in us, so it is our natural tendency to worship God, but we are led astray and swept along to worship objects of wood and stones that can neither appreciate *your* worship, nor respond to *your* petitions. The caution Paul gives the Church at Corinth and also to us is, be very careful not be led astray and swept along in a direction away from worship of the One and Only True God.

The Corinthians were very concerned as they heard people speaking words they did not understand; were these Christ-followers, therefore, possessed by a spirit that gave them the ability to say things no one understood?

Paul responds to this: the Holy Spirit cannot get people to speak anything negative about Jesus such as, *Jesus is accursed*, and no one can say *Jesus is Lord*, except by this **Holy Spirit**.

Having established the legitimacy of **the** Holy Spirit, Paul explains, there are many different kinds of spiritual gifts (*special abilities*), but the source of all such gifts is only One Spirit, the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but we all serve **ONLY** one Lord; and God works in all of us, and it is the **ONE and ONLY** God who works in each of us.

In several studies we have discovered the principle of “bookmarks”, similar words, phrases and contexts which appear at the beginning and end of a passage. Paul begins the next section (v.7) stating, *a Spiritual gift is given to each of us, **so we can help each other***, and ends with, *All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines (v.11)*.

Paul is emphatic in making this clear: the “distribution” of all special abilities is the sole responsibility of the Holy Spirit, who determines which one of us can be trusted with a special ability. The work of being *the eyes of the Lord searching the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him... people who do not put their trust in*

earthly powers (kings, rulers, administrators, magistrates etc.) [2 Chronicles 16:9] has been entrusted to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a unique person and not simply a power or an influence, who is one with the Father **and** with the Son. The Holy Spirit protects that which belongs to God, as seen at Creation, *The earth as formless and empty and harness covered the deep waters, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters (protecting it)* [Genesis 1:2]. Jesus left us with the image of the Holy Spirit *be with you forever ... he dwells with you and will be in you* (John 14:16-17). In other words, His ministry is both permanent and personal, protecting us for God's coming Kingdom of which Christ will be King.

Jesus guarantees this truth: *Those who believe in me will do the things that I am doing. They will do even greater things because I am going to the Father. I will do anything you ask the Father in my name so that **the Father will be given glory** because of the Son. If you ask me to do something, I will do it* [John 14:12-16]. ... *The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own, but He will speak what He hears, and He will declare to you what is to come. He will glorify Me by taking from what is Mine and disclosing it to you. Everything that belongs to the Father is Mine. That is why I said that the Spirit will take from what is Mine and disclose it to you* [John 16:12-14].

Paul had to fill in this background to address the rather simple question which resulted in the whole of 1 Corinthians 12-14, that of the importance of special abilities, especially the highly misunderstood special ability of talking in languages/tongues.

The special abilities given to each of us by the Holy Spirit includes the ability to give wise Godly advice, to another a message of special knowledge, to another great faith, some the gift of healing, one person to perform miracles, to prophecy, the ability to discern whether a message is from God or another spirit. **To another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.**

Notice the clever way Paul responds to their question about speaking in tongues/languages by placing at the end, without minimising its importance, adding the special ability to interpret this language, because God does not communicate in riddles, He speaks very clearly for all to understand. Jesus said, *My sheep know my voice* (John 10:27) and that's where we all need to be: able to discern and recognise God's voice as He speaks to us about our lives, life itself and our responsibilities in and through the Church which is the body of Christ.

It is daunting, if not frightening to think about special gifts and abilities. Some might think of doing what they like doing as a special gift, others may shy away from using the social ability the Holy Spirit has given them, and many more are afraid of using the full extent of the special ability given to them. Beyond the list above, there is the gift of hospitality, of befriending and friendship, of listening and caring, to lend a helping hand, to stand beside someone going through a difficult time, to encourage and so many more.

Will you allow yourself to listen to the Holy Spirit and let Him guide you to discover the “special abilities” God has given you and wants you to use for His glory to be seen in you?

Take your time and commit yourself as you listen to the next song, to let yourself to be guided by the Holy Spirit **AMEN.**

LISTEN **Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me** **298**

PRAYER

Father, don't still my beating heart; let it beat in sync with Yours, that I may know how you want me to use the gifts you have given, for Your glory, and the glory of Jesus my Christ.

HYMN **I know not why God's wondrous grace** **532**

BENEDICTION

As you leave this place, how will you live?

We go from this place of worship to share the gifts we have been given.

We go from this time of worship to build up the Body of Christ.

We go from this Holy space to live in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We go with love in hearts, peace in our soul, and with the presence God forever.

AMEN.

As a member of Botley Baptist Church, please drop off your tithe envelope and offerings on the plate at the back of the Church, remit directly into the bank or drop-off your envelope in the Church's postbox.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FAITHFULNESS IN TITHING AND GIVING

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THANK YOU.