Study in 1st Corinthians 13 - Part 3

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth Stewart

[0:00] Now, we'll read the Word of God in the New Testament in the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians and chapter 12.

And we'll read at verse 12. First Corinthians chapter 12 at verse 12. And Paul is here speaking of the Church of Christ and he's comparing it to a human body.
First Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12. For 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.
For 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.
For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?
[1:29] And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?

If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body?
But now are they many members, yet but one body. And 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.
No, much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor.
And our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness, for our comely parts have no need. But God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care, one for another.
[2:48] And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. No, you are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

That means individual members. And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.
Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?
But covet earnestly the best gifts? And yet I show unto you a more excellent way. And so on may the Lord bless the reading of his own holy word.
We'll sing now in the same psalm that we had last, Psalm 106, at verse 42.
[3:55] Psalm 106, at verse, sorry, verse 43. To the tune Bedford.

He many times delivered them, but with their counsel so they him provoked, that for their sin they were brought very low. Yet their affliction he beheld when he did hear their cry, and he for them his covenant did call to memory.
We'll sing fourth stanzas, verses 43 to 47, to the tune Bedford to God's praise. He many times delivered them, but with their counsel so they him provoked, that for their sin they were brought to the Lord.
And he did hear their cry, and he for them his covenant did call.
He day Lucy, after his November, he learned to have rezir.
[5:59] CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

1 Corinthians chapter 13. And verse 4. 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

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I took at this chapter some Sabbath mornings ago, and I had intended really to confine looking at it to Sunday mornings, but sometimes it's difficult to maintain a sense of continuity when I'm not that often here in the mornings.
And so I'd like tonight just to pick up where we were before we lose the thread of it, because it's a very important chapter. As I mentioned, when we were looking at it, in fact, it's a critical chapter, not only in terms of its relevance to ourselves today, but simply because of what it is in itself.
It highlights for us how fundamental love is in the Christian life. Now, you'll remember the situation to which Paul was writing.
[8:26] He was writing to the church in Corinth. And it was a church that was in a situation really of grave disorder. It was deeply divided. And these divisions, for some reason, centered largely around particular individuals.

Some groups in the church said that they belonged to Apollos. Some said that they belonged to Paul. Some said that they belonged to Peter. And so on. And because of that, the church was really deeply divided.
And because of that, there were many aspects of the congregational life that were just falling apart. And if you read the letter very carefully, you'll notice how the Lord's Supper was being abused, how people were mistreating each other, how the worship itself was being affected by the disorders and the divisions in the congregation.
And the apostle rightly says that the root of that really is pride. Pride that had quenched their love. Now, it stands to reason that pride and love can't really coexist too well anyway.
The essence of pride is myself. The essence of love is another. And love always looks outside itself to someone else's good.
[9:41] But pride is always concerned with my own good. And that's why pride always quenches Christian love. They're at war with each other. And it seems that from the way Paul is talking here, that the real source of this problem began in relation to the different gifts and abilities that the Holy Spirit had given to the Lord's people.

Now, the Holy Spirit does give different gifts to the Lord's people. And in some cases, he just consecrates a natural ability that you have.
And he uses it particularly for the Lord. In other ways, he brings out maybe something that you didn't even know was in you. And he brings it to the fore as his distinctive work and his contribution. And it's a gift with which he endows you. Sometimes he just endows you with something that you don't have at all. Gives you a new ability, whatever it be. It's in relation to all that that the difficulties came out in Corinth.
And the difficulty, as we saw, was this, that those who possessed the most spectacular gifts began to despise those who didn't have such spectacular ones. For example, those who could perform miracles and those who could speak foreign languages by the power of the Spirit, they were looked upon or they began to look at themselves as somehow more important and more significant than other people.
[11:07] And the result was that other people with less spectacular gifts were left out. And Paul's reminding them here that gifts are given by Christ for a purpose.

And that purpose is to build up the Church of Christ. And unless your gifts or abilities are being used to further Christ's cause and to help the people of God, then they are being misused instead of being used.
And that's what the Apostle is saying. Now, he's taking them here to the decline in their love. Pride has caused their love to decline.
And they've become very inward. And they've become very selfish. And this decline in love, Paul says, is really a very, very serious thing. And he describes the seriousness of it in verses 1 to 3 of chapter 13.
And we looked at that. He says, love is a necessary mark of a Christian. Without it, he says, you're nothing. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I could speak every language in the world and even beyond it, if I have not love, I am just a noise, sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.
[12:14] And again in verse 2, if I have the gift of prophecy, so that I can understand all mysteries, and even if I have a special kind of faith that can remove mountains, still, if I haven't got true Christian love, I am nothing.

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And even if I give everything I've got to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, if I don't have Christian love, it is of no profit to me. Now, that brings before us, and we've seen that already, how important this love is.
Unless it is in our heart, then everything else counts for nothing. Our heads could be full of knowledge, but without true Christian love towards the brethren, then we are nothing.
And so then he goes on from verse 4 to verse 8 to describe this love, so that we will pray for it and cultivate it in our lives.
And we saw already in verse 4 how charity was long-suffering, how it suffered long, how it put up with things and with people, how it was patient, and how it was kind.
[13:20] Now, I didn't look at that especially, but it's just the flip side, as it were, of being long-suffering. Not only do you endure oppression and endure persecution, but you try to show kindness and to do good even to those who are persecuting you.

So, love is long-suffering and it is kind. And tonight I want to look with you at these three that you have following that in verse 4. Charity does not envy, charity does not vaunt itself or parade itself, and charity is not puffed up.
And all these relate to the talents or abilities that God has given you. And there's no need you saying that God hasn't given you talents, gifts, or abilities.
He has. He has. And it's very important that you view them rightly and that you use them rightly.
And there are three things we mustn't do.
We mustn't envy. We mustn't envy somebody else. And we mustn't parade ourselves or be puffed up ourselves. And we're going to see how that was the case in Corinth and what they were to do about it and ourselves do.
[14:34] But I think all this reminds us, in a general sense, that the church is full of sinners. Sinners. You know, sometimes I come across people who say that they can't have much to do with God or to do with the church because the church is full of inconsistent people or full of sinners.

Well, yes, that is so. When you go to a hospital, you're not shocked to find people lying sick in bed. You rather expect that to be the case by the name hospital.
The same should be true with respect to a church. You ought not to be shocked to see defective people there or to see sinners there. That is what is there.
And even saved sinners are still sinners. By grace, they repent and they strive to move forward and they love the Lord and they strive to be more like the Lord, but they are not perfect.
They have failings. And sometimes in their lives, there might be grave lapses that the Lord deals with in many different ways in order to put right. And the church in Corinth and many other churches and the whole of the Bible teaches that that's the kind of situation that we should expect.
[15:48] And so recognize the devil. Whenever the voice comes to you that says, how can I be a part of the church when such and such is in the church, recognize the devil. He takes a flaw that might be in a person and he exaggerates it.

He maybe even adds to it altogether and he brings it before you as a grave obstacle in your way towards going any further in your relationship to God. And the devil delights nothing better than to stumble you like that and to put obstacles in your way like that.
You have to, and I have to, take my eyes off these things and to put my eyes on Christ himself and open my ears to what the word of Christ is telling you.
In the church visible, there will be the lost and the saved anyway. There are some members who are going to be cast away when it comes to the judgment seat of God. That is a fact.
I ought not to let these things make me stumble. I must make sure that I myself enter in and that I encourage others to enter in. There's no use in making excuses for myself to stay out.
[16:54] Now, first of all, envy. Love does not envy. Now, this is important. What is envy? Well, I suppose it's to be dissatisfied with your own gifts and abilities compared with the gifts that God has given to other people.

That's what it is. You're dissatisfied with your own compared to what God has given to others. And you grudge the fact that they have more than you have.
You envy it. You covet it. And so, if they're preferred before you in anything, then you grudge that and you're not at all happy if you're passed over.
Now, I'm not saying this with reference to the election of office bearers, but it does come to mind too. It's not a good thing if we're passed over in anything for a particular purpose to grudge that or to

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be envious or to be angry or whatever.
We're always told never to envy the position that others have or the gifts and abilities that God gives them. Now, what's the root of this envy? Well, it's just the desire to be first, isn't it?
[18:09] That's what it is. It's the desire to be at the center of attention. In other words, it's pride. All roads lead to Rome. Everything seems to go back there at the end of the day.

Pride. It was at the heart of the fall. It's of the very essence of sin. Pride. And the problem with envy is this, that if you leave it alone, it develops into hate.
And as Christ tells us, hate is a degree of murder. It's not murder in the first degree, but it has the essence of murder in it.
To hate your brother in your heart is a degree of murder. And once that hatred comes into you, well, not only do you rejoice when that person falls, but you'll plan his fall, and you'll scheme his fall, and you'll be delighted when the fall comes around.
Now, there are many examples of it in the Bible. Look, for example, at Joseph's brothers. Joseph's brothers looked at Joseph, their younger son, with envy.
[19:22] And that started quite innocently. God spoke to Joseph, and he gave him special revelations. But they didn't like the fact that their younger brother had received these special revelations from God.

They didn't like it. They thought themselves more entitled, and they couldn't stand the fact that someone inferior to them had got them, and they resented it. And then we're told in the Scripture that they began to hate him for his dreams.
They hated him because of the way God spoke to him and made himself known to him. Now, I think that reminds us, and I think it's important to understand that at that point, Joseph's brothers were not believers.
But they envied him, and that envy came to hatred. And eventually, they conspired against him, and they dug a pit for him. And before killing him, they sold him to the Ishmaelites going down to Egypt so that their hands wouldn't be red with blood.
So envy turned to hatred. The only thing that stopped the murder was the chance to sell him. Then again, take someone like Korah. Now, Korah was born a privileged man.
[20:32] He was a Levite. And the Levites had special duties in God's church. It was the Levites' responsibility to carry everything that was in the tabernacle. They carried the Ark of the Covenant.

They carried the Altar of Incense. They carried the badger skins that formed the outer covering of the tabernacle. They used poles to transport everything.
They were the ones who touched it. They were the ones who erected it. And they were the ones who watched over it. But it wasn't good enough. One day, Korah came up to Moses in the camp. And as David tells us later, they envied Moses in the camp. And what did they say? Well, what they said to him was this. And it should always be a fearful warning to everyone against the spirit of envy and the spirit of ambition.
What they said to Moses was this. You take too much upon yourself. The whole congregation is holy. Every one of them.
[21:36] Why then do you lift up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? And he pretended to be a great democrat. And that was the veil under which he hid his own naked ambition.

And Moses said to him, he said this to him, Here, you sons of Levi, now listen to how wise what Moses said was. Does it seem a small thing to you that God separated you from the whole congregation to do the service of the tabernacle?
And he had brought you near to him and all your brothers with you. And you seek the priesthood also. For which cause you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord.
And you say, What is error? Why do you murder against him? Now you notice what happened. Ambition had set in. It wasn't good enough to be doing what they were doing.
They wished to be doing what Moses was doing and to be doing what Aaron was doing. And the net result of it was that they perished. Professing Christian people, they were overcome by envy.
[22:48] Members in the church, members in good standing, overwhelmed by envy, and the ground opened and it split them up and they descended into a lost eternity as the epistle of Jude in the New Testament tells us.

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They perished in their way of rebellion. What about King Saul too? He was another admirable man. He was a humble man too.
The scriptures tell us that. And he was head and shoulders in his physique above everybody else. He was a handsome man. He was a capable man. He became the first king.
And he seemed a spiritual man and an earnest man, a man of God. But he became proud. And one day, sometime after they had fought the Philistines, the women went through the city with their timbrels and they were dancing and singing a song saying, Saul has slain thousands, but David has slain his ten thousands.
And the minute Saul heard that, he was a changed man. He must have been changed before it anyway, but he was a changed man when he heard that song because the scriptures tell us that from that day forward, he eyed David.
[24:04] And when he got the opportunity, when he was in one of his depressive moods and when his spirit was troubling him, an evil spirit from the Lord was troubling him, we're told in the scripture because of how he was turning away from God.

And David played the harp to bring him round. Saul took hold of his javelin and threw it at David. And David just managed to miss the point of that javelin.
And he tried it again sometime afterwards. He was even so caught up with envy that when his own son, Jonathan, carried on his love to David, that he tried to put the spear through his own son, Jonathan, also.
That's how Saul ended up. And he ended up committing suicide on the battlefield. And God tells us in the scriptures, he says to David, I will not take my mercy from you as I took my mercy from Saul. I will not take it from you as I took my mercy from Saul. Saul was desolate. And Saul's soul was abandoned because he was given over to envy.
[25:12] Bit by bit. And his envy turned to hatred. His hatred consumed him and he wanted to murder. And Saul went down that path.

And when... I'm not talking about polishing the rough edges in your Christian life or mine. I'm not talking about tinkering with things that may or may not be unimportant, may be important, with cosmetic things.
I'm talking about things that unless you deal with them can bring you to perdition. That's what I'm speaking of. Yes, it's all very well to say that a man enslaved to drunkenness will go to a lost eternity.
Or the man who is enslaved to adultery or immorality will go to a lost eternity. But I tell you that the man enslaved to envy will go to a lost eternity too. And the man consumed by jealousy and hatred he will go to a lost eternity also.
Suppose he sit at the Lord's table from year to year. If that's the condition of his soul then that's where he shall be found. And that's why it's so important.
[26:21] In my life and yours every time I see this flower appear, this weed, that I cut it out. That I cut it out. And how do you cut it out?

By praying about it. And by confessing it. Recognizing it for what it is and naming it before the Lord and asking God for forgiveness for it.
And never allowing yourself by his grace to be caught up in envy. But rather to do good to those who are preferred over you. No, you're not to envy.
And neither are we to be puffed up. Now this word puff up or these two words are very interesting because Paul quotes them five times in the first epistle to the Corinthians.
He tells them that they're puffed up. Now the words just mean what we would normally understand them to mean. It means to be full of wind. To be inflated. That's what Paul tells them they are.
[27:19] And what he means by that is that for some reason some of them have become full of a sense of self-importance. importance. You know, 2 John is a very small letter.

You'll find it tucked away just before Jude and Revelation. 2 John, 3 John, it's a very, very small letter. But there's an interesting character in it. There's two interesting characters.
One called Diotrephes and the other called Demetrius. Demetrius was a man who had a good report throughout all the church. But we're told that Diotrephes loves to have the preeminence.
John had recognized that about him, that he loved to have the preeminence. Now that's a dangerous condition in any person's soul when he begins to glory in what he has and he becomes inflated with a sense of self-importance.

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We need humility, I'll come to that later, to know what we are and to remember what we are and not to swagger around or to think that we're more than we are.
[28:24] And that's what word swagger brings me to this. Neither does love vaunt itself. Charity vaunteth not itself. Now to vaunt yourself means just that to parade or to brag or to swagger or to boast.

It means that you show off or that you desire a clause. It means to be ostentatious. And you know the kind of thing it is. It's a person who walks around and the whole air around him seems to say look at me and listen to me and notice me, watch me.
Well that's what vaunting yourself means. And Paul says the true Christian love that Christ works in the heart of God's people is not like that. It doesn't go around with a swagger or ostentatiously saying watch me look at me.
It rather seeks to hide in a certain way and I'll come to the kind of way later on. Not parading itself but rather taking its place humbly in the church of God.
Now how did this happen in Corinth? Right. First of all those who had special gifts rejected the others. The eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of thee nor again the head to the feet I have no need of you.
[29:44] Now of course the eye and the head are specially important parts of the body. We would all acknowledge that that they have particular functions. But Paul says it doesn't make sense for the eye to say to the hand I have no need of you.

Supposing you just had an eye and nothing else what's that eye going to do? It can see it can evaluate it can understand but it can't do. Here's your practical hand and without this practical hand the eye is naked the eye is powerless.
It can evaluate it can analyze but it can do nothing. And a good eye will recognize that the hand is needed if only sometimes to take a beam out of itself.
Yes the hand has its use and neither can the head say to the foot that I have no need of you. The foot has an important place in the body too. Does it not?
It walks and it gets the body places. Again the head can think but the foot can walk and what uses the head without the foot. And then again there was this not only were those who were perhaps specially endowed with gifts or in particular positions not only were they proud but the result was that the rest felt left out.
[31:00] Paul says in verse 15 if the foot shall say because I am not the hand I am not of the body he says is it still therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say because I am not the eye I am not of the body is it therefore not of the body?

Paul says yes of course it is. The fact that it thinks it isn't of the body doesn't mean that it isn't it is. And the fact is that there are some people who feel that they are just not needed in the church of Christ.
And maybe there are some of you here tonight and you feel that if you were to die tomorrow the church would just go on without you and of course in the highest sense that's true it will go on without every single one of us. But you would feel not missed you feel as though you have no need there is no need of you here today and Paul says yes you are part of the body.
If you are in Christ believing in Christ and trusting in Christ you are a vital part of the body of Christ. How you'll deal with that we'll look at in a moment. But one thing you must never do at the outset is give way to discouragement about it.
God has a place for you and God means you to mean something in the church of Christ because he called you he put you in Christ and he gave you the Holy Spirit and his love is upon you therefore you have a place in the body of Christ.
[32:26] Whether you're crippled whether you may have for some reason be mentally slower than other people whether you're small in stature if you don't have a good job or whatever it doesn't matter.

The Christian church doesn't revolve around things like that although it sometimes gives the appearance of it it does not. And a right thinking and right functioning church of Christ will never give place in that kind of way.
You have your place and we'll come to it in a moment. After all as Paul says God set the members in the body as it has pleased him. There you go.

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He makes a foot he makes a hand he makes a toe he makes a nose and he makes an eye as it has pleased him. Look God made you the way you are.
By giving thought you can't add one cubit to your stature you can't make yourself bigger you can't give yourself another face but the one you have or another hand but the one you have God made you the way you are and it's vitally important that you understand that accept that he placed you as you are in the body it pleased him to do that and we're never to grumble to God about the way that we're made we're not it's a sin to do that we're always to be reconciled to the gifts and abilities that we have by all means develop them but never grumble about them and never grumble that you don't have another set than the ones you have you've got yours and God set them like that as it pleased him so it's important to come to terms with what you are and then again there's this Paul reminds us that the richness of the body and the richness of the church consists in its variety if the whole body was an eye he says where were the hearing if the whole were hearing where were the smelling now of course the picture here is quite an absurd one in a way if it was just one single eye he says look at the many attributes you've lost if it was just a nose he says look at the many attributes you've lost or just a head look at what you've lost the church of Christ consists in every part with its own contribution
[34:47] I remember preaching in this area sometime back in the prayer meeting and I made mention of something like the toe you could say well what use is your toe well maybe not much until you try walking having lost it and then you'll find out I was told by someone in the congregation about a well known English cricketer who lost part of his toe in an accident at sea when he was in the West English touring with the cricket side and he had to have part of his toe removed well he couldn't bowl again I'm sure he thought that it would never really have such an effect but it did have an effect the toe matters your fingers matter every part of your body matters God made it that way and the same is true with the church of Christ everybody has his own contribution now you say well very well but I still feel that I don't well let's look at these things first of all I think this whole passage tells us that whatever you can do for Christ do it for him and do it for him it's not so much what am I good at that you ask but what do people find useful that I can do put it that way you know when you start analyzing your own gifts it becomes a very self-centered kind of thing after all who can look at himself and say oh yes

I'm gifted here and I'm gifted there there's a problem with that whole approach you could try taking it out of that approach altogether and say well what is it that people seem to find profitable that I do does it seem to help people if I appear even at a certain event or if I try and help in preparing for something if I prepare food even or something of that kind is that a useful thing that I can do have I got time to do it well God gave me that time to do it then maybe I'm not in the thick of people all the time but maybe that frees me up to do more things and to give more of a contribution to God you've got your place look for it and you'll find it a space for you to do something a little thing even for the cause of Christ in any case there is no such thing as a little thing for the cause of Christ there isn't shouldn't even talk about Christ says a cup of cold water will not lose its own reward so how can we talk of little things in the cause of Christ another thing that's important is this you watch out for other people who feel useless in the church of Christ and give them special honour do you notice what Paul says in verses 23 those members of the body which we think to be less honourable upon these we bestow more abundant honour now I think what he's saying there is that suppose you have a part of the body and let's say there's a blemish in it or a defect or something well what you'll do is you'll tend you'll try as hard as you can to hide that blemish and to make that part as honourable and as presentable as you can we all do that everybody does that well Paul says the body of Christ should function like that too you should beautify the parts that are weak help those that feel withdrawn involve those that feel uninvolved and it's all very well to say well let the minister and let the elder do that you do it you do it you ask someone along to something and you talk to the person that nobody else is talking to outside the church door yes it's all very well for you to go with a group so that you can be part of the group and you can belong but you take the courage to leave the group yourself and involve that other person or introduce that person to the group what is it after all when we want to be part of the group and don't care about the person who's outside the group but pride pride and it's contempt for a weaker member we were taught that in our homes when we were we to help people involve people why do we forget it when we become
Christians as though these things don't matter Paul says it's at the heart of everything our treatment of people is at the heart of everything how we interact with our fellow believers it's at the core I'm

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scandalized at things that are said and done about the Lord's people what's aired in the public in the name of so-called truth and there's no care or concern to how it may hurt people and people who are connected to these people these people have families these people have children mothers does it matter does the fact that something is true allow you or that it may be true allow you to plaster it everywhere no God forbid that I should do that or that you should do that let that never be your attitude to any member of the church of Christ never ever ever it's an abomination and if there is anything that should bring the church to its knees in prayer it's that kind of conduct which brings disrepute upon the whole cause of
Christ that's what it does nothing less look out for those who are rejected or who may be condemned in any way for their weakness and then again there's this you should pray for the spirit to recognize good and abilities in other people you know very often we can have a critical spirit of other people and we just overlook the good that is there for some reason does it give a strange sense of comfort to ourselves to find their blemishes as though somehow it makes us better I don't know but for some reason we can just overlook the good and magnify the defects but we should look for the good in people and we should learn to admire hearts more than heads and to respect more Christian qualities rather than intellectual qualities and things of that kind and to help each other develop them help each other develop them that we would all become more
[41:16] Christ-like in this world that's very very important and that we think of no labour as a cheap labour in Christ's cause and then the supreme thing that Christ tells us put others before yourself let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus he made himself of no reputation was Christ's ministry selfish that's the last thing it was wasn't it the last thing it was all he did was give himself to other people he gave himself to their needs to their circumstances and to their situations and that's how he wants you to be more concerned about others than you are about yourself you know we sometimes carry a lot of diseases in ourselves because we're constantly looking at ourselves you know I'm not going to tar everyone with the one brush not at all there are many reasons why a person maybe can be depressive medical reasons as for a spiritual one so let me be clear about that but many a depression can be caused by our inward introspective look by being so concerned with how we feel how people are dealing with us with our situation with our happiness and the strange thing is by

God's moral law by his spiritual law the more you become obsessed with yourself the more you lose your own peace and contentment isn't that right what Christ said is look out be more concerned for that person's happiness than your own be more concerned with his gifts and abilities than you are with your own and again by God's spiritual law you'll find that things are better for yourself think more on the things of others than on the things that belong to yourself that's what Paul says to the Philippians and they were wracked by a dissension too between two women a dispute between two women and the congregation was threatening to sever the whole congregation and Paul says look humble yourselves he says and every man think on the things of others rather than the things that belong to themselves in other words learn to rejoice in other person's gifts and to spend more time rejoicing in them than mourning about your own you spend no time mourning about your own let me take just a couple of scriptural examples
I'm nearly finished look at John the Baptist if ever a man was endowed with gifts he was Christ said to him about him that amongst those born of women there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist that was the kind of man he was but when Christ came John the Baptist said he must increase and I must decrease he said that and he meant it and he meant it gladly John the Baptist star faded in terms of this world's popularity and this world's known he was glad to take a back seat because the Lord Jesus Christ had come that was John the Baptist attitude he was concerned with Christ and not with himself and is that not the way that we ourselves should be let me decrease and let Christ increase it's not what
I get or my name or my esteem it is Christ and if other people's talents and gifts are greater than mine good if it promotes Christ's name good Paul even got to that position he came to strange spiritual positions because he was so advanced in his Christian life there were people preaching to add to Paul's bondage you ever notice that in Philippians chapter 1 some preach the gospel out of envy and out of strife supposing to add affliction to my bonds what did he mean well even within the professing church of Christ there were some people who had taken such a dislike to the apostle Paul that they tried to make his affliction harder through their own preaching but he says I don't care as long as Christ is preached by them that's Christ and it being preached out of envy and strife as

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long as it was
Christ that was preached yes those people would have to give account to God for it but the message was still Christ like and so he rejoiced in it he reached that place what about Moses the spirit came down on the Israelites in a particular way and several of them began to prophesy and some of them they saw it as a kind of challenge to Moses all Moses could say is would to God that all the people were prophets that's what he said he didn't say that's taking away from me he said I wish everyone would be like that that's what he said Moses was like that Christ glorified that's what matters you know surely it's said that preachers too can feel jealous and of course they can but surely anyone listening to the gospel being preached better than they themselves could preach it would say good good and all power as long as
[47:12] Christ is being preached that is what matters we rejoice in one another's gifts and callings and let it always be like that and I think there's some things just two things I want to mention in conclusion the first thing that should keep us humble as this every one of us whatever your gift or your ability it's not your own anyway it's not your own anyway as Paul says 1st Corinthians 4 verse 7 who makes you to differ from another what have you that you didn't receive and if you received it why are you glorying as if you had not received it that's a very simple point if you received it why are it originated with yourself it did not it's from Christ to Christ let everything be Christ centered and the last place there's just this there's nothing that will move your desire to love as thinking of

Christ loving himself there was no one ever as gifted as Christ was without measure he received the Holy Ghost and still it is said of him he shall not strive nor cry nor shall he cause his voice to be heard in the streets that's a remarkable statement it doesn't mean that he never preached or that he didn't do the work of God it just meant that he went about it in a very unostentatious way he shall not strive he shall not cry neither shall his voice be heard in the streets it must be pretty difficult to be all powerful and to perform miracles and to be unobtrusive but that's exactly how he was that's exactly how he was and if we have a fraction of what he had why should we make a noise like a tingling cymbal or a gong why should we whatever we received we received from him now can we not all resolve to begin to look at the things of others it even comes into listening to a sermon you know when a
Christian is alive he might say well this might not be particularly for myself but it might be for my brother when a Christian is in a bad way what he says this is not really for myself and that's the end of it and he come out and say I didn't get anything today that wasn't of much use but when a Christian is alive he'll say and he'll pray too I pray that that will be blessed to that person I pray that it will be blessed to that person there might be a word here for that person that's how we should be think on the things of others and your own problems will gradually disappear let us pray Lord our God enable us to live more as thou art requiring us to live and help us to remember that when we come short and even when the roots of pride and the roots of envy grow and flowers appear and weeds grow that bring damage to the garden we are thankful that by confession and by repentance the blood of
Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin and we pray that we would be enabled to lay hold of that again and give us a heart for all thy people for Christ's sake Amen

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