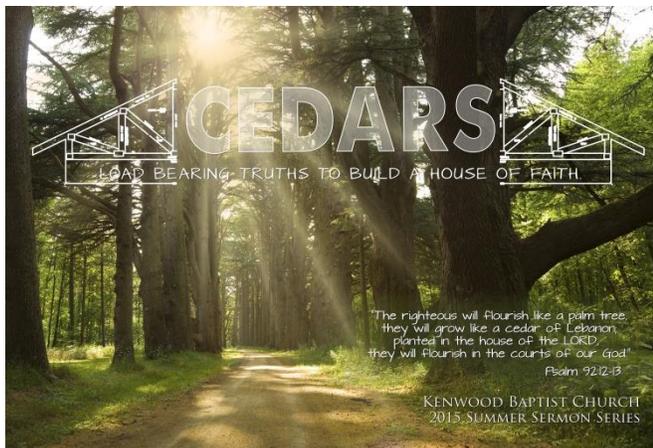


***Cedars: Load-Bearing Truths to Build a House of Faith  
"Who Is the Holy Spirit and What Are His Gifts?"***

1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
Cedars Sermon Series  
Kenwood Baptist Church  
Pastor David Palmer  
August 16, 2015

**TEXT:** 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

We continue this morning in our summer series on the Cedars of Lebanon: Loadbearing Truths to Build a House of Faith. We have traveled this summer to look at: What is the Bible? Where



do I find truth? What is God like? What are we as people made in God's image, fallen yet redeemed in Christ? We looked at Christ's work on the cross, His saving intention and initiative in election, His declaration of our righteousness, and the sanctifying presence of the Spirit. Last Sunday, we looked at: What is the church, this sacred gathering of people designed by God for a cosmic display of His manifold wisdom and changed lives. This

morning we turn our attention to the Person of the Holy Spirit. Who is the Holy Spirit and what are His gifts? God's presence, His real, personal, empowering presence of the Holy Spirit separates and defines God's people in the world. We want to look at these two great truths: who is the Spirit, and what are the Spirit's gifts in our midst? How does the Spirit of God operate in our community? We want look first at who is the Spirit, in a broad sense, in the pages of Scripture. Then we will look more specifically at 1 Corinthians 12.

We begin with the question: "Who is the Holy Spirit?" God does not keep us in suspense very long, for the Holy Spirit is present in the opening sentence of the Bible. The Bible begins in Genesis 1:1-2 with:

*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."*

The Holy Spirit is present at creation. I remember when I was a student at Hebrew Union having the opportunity for some exchanges with those who were training to become rabbis. I

discovered by being there that not only do most Christians know very little about Judaism, but I discovered that most Jews know very little about Christianity. During one of our gatherings, one of these rabbis-in-training had a question. I could see it on his face. He pulled me aside and said, "Can I ask you a question?" I thought, "Sure." He said, "How is it that Christians don't worship three Gods?" He was really serious: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in his ears came in as our having three different Gods. I responded to this question in good rabbinic fashion, with a question. I said, "Do you worship two?" He looked at me puzzled, and I read Genesis 1:1-2: There is God and the Spirit of God. He said, "You know, I have not thought about that." The Holy Spirit is present in the opening sentence of the Book of Genesis. He is present in the second chapter of the Bible in a very vivid way as God creates humanity, like a potter fashioning us out of the dust of the earth, shaping us into a design of His creation. Yet, we are only dust and dirt, and He calls humanity Adam, which in Hebrew means *dirt*. There is dirt in the shape of a person, and it is nothing but dirt until the Holy Spirit comes in Genesis 2:7:

*"Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature."*

The Spirit of God is present at creation; the Spirit of God is present to make us alive in God's image. The Holy Spirit is present in Scripture to come upon people with gifts and creative power. In Exodus 31:2-3ff, we read of Bezalel and Oholiab:

*"See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship."*

Creative gifts are given to Bezalel and Oholiab to make things that are beautiful, and one of the ways the Spirit of God is present is not only in the technical gifts that Bezalel and Oholiab had, but that their gifts are actually used in the context of worship and cause God's people to enter into His courts with praise. The Spirit of God comes upon people in Scripture with gifts of leadership. In Judges 6 is one example: Gideon, who from a human point of view is unqualified; he is young; he is hesitant; he is from an obscure family; and yet his nation Israel is in a time of great suffering under the oppression of the Midianites. Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress and harvesting it to hide it from being stolen by the Midianites, and suddenly the Angel of the Lord appears to him and says in Judges 6:12:

*"The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor."*

The Spirit of God comes on Gideon, though he is unlikely from a human point of view, and God raises Gideon up and leads Israel away from idolatry and brings a great victory through him. In Judges 6:34 we read:

*"The Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon."*

The Hebrew text literally reads that *the Spirit of God clothed Himself with Gideon*. When the Spirit of God is at work within us, He will raise us up. He will give gifts that are to be used in the context of worship. He will raise up gifts, and you will find yourself doing things and saying things and serving in ways that are effective and powerful, and they often will come precisely through your human weakness, and God will be glorified. The prophet Joel promises that someday God will pour out His Spirit on all of God's people, and that this will result in a ministry that has a prophetic quality. In Joel 2:28-29, the Lord says:

*"I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions."*

Men and women, young and old, will be ministering in the power of the Spirit. Aren't you thankful that the Holy Spirit doesn't use just women, doesn't use just men, doesn't use just the younger generation? He uses the old ones, as well. He promises a ministry that is effective and powerful, and we stand in the courts of God and know Him, according to the promise of Joel 2. In Luke 3:16, John the Baptist told his hearers:

*"I baptize you with water, but He who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."*

It is not a portion of the Spirit; it is an immersion, saturation with the Spirit. It is being filled with the Spirit, dripping wet, as it were. I love when people come up from the waters of baptism. When you come up from the water, the water is pouring off of you, and you are soaked, you are redeemed, signifying that you have been fully cleansed and washed in Christ. John the Baptist says that when Christ will come, He is going to "soak us" with the Spirit like that. Jesus said to His followers in Luke 24:49:

*"Behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."*

In Scripture, the Holy Spirit is present at creation, present in our animation as human beings. He comes upon us with gifts to be used in worship, leadership, prophetic ministry, and prayer. The Holy Spirit's presence empowers us. Jesus says we are clothed with this power. We read the fulfillment of this in Acts 1:8 when Jesus makes it clear:

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

We will receive power when the Spirit comes upon us, and one of the effects of the Spirit of God upon us is that we become Christ's witnesses both where we live, regionally, and to the ends of the earth. Do you have enough power in your life? Do you have enough driving, compelling force within you that it is moving you to walk in God's ways? Do you have enough of

God in your life? Are you satisfied with how much God is in you and working in you and through you? Is there enough of the Holy Spirit at Kenwood Baptist Church? Is there enough of the Spirit of God moving in our community and city? I hope that you are not satisfied but desire more of the Spirit, to be so saturated and empowered. Gordon Fee says:

“The presence of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of the promises found in the OT that God himself would breathe on us and we would live; ... The gathered church and the individual believer are the new locus of God’s own presence with his people; and the Spirit is the way God is now present.

“We are not left on our own as far as our relationship with God is concerned... Life in the present is empowered by the God who dwells among us and in us. The Holy Spirit is not merely some force or influence. ... Power is not thought of merely in terms of the miraculous, the extraordinary. Rather, Paul understood the Spirit’s power in the broadest possible way. On the one hand, the future had broken in so powerfully that signs and wonders and miracles are matter-of-fact; on the other hand, the Spirit also empowers for endurance in the midst of adversity.

“Here we know life and vitality in our personal lives and in the community of faith. Here we will have the veil removed so that we might behold God’s own glory in the face of Christ, so that we are constantly being renewed into his likeness. Here we will regularly expect, and see, both the working of miracles and the fellowship of his sufferings.”

We need the Holy Spirit at Kenwood and in our life together. The Spirit of God comes in fulfillment of God's promise. The Holy Spirit is God's personal, empowering presence.

Now we want to consider from 1 Corinthians 12 what the gifts of the Spirit are. What happens when the Spirit of God becomes present in our life together? Paul tells the Corinthian church that the gifts of the Spirit are an important aspect of the gathered church. The presence of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, are important for our life together, and Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:1:

*“Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.”*

I listened to an interview this week with a Christian leader, and he was asked about the gifts of the Spirit. He said, “If we don't talk about the Spirit, if we don't talk about the gifts of the Spirit from the pulpit, the Holy Spirit tends to recede into the background of our life together, and it is critical that the Spirit is at work among us.” Paul says to the Corinthian church and to us this morning: “I don't want you to be ignorant about the Spirit. I don't want you to be uninformed.”

It is an important topic for a flourishing church. He says then in 1 Corinthians 12:2:

*“You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.”*

We find ourselves thinking: “What's the connection? Why does he say this now?” Paul is saying this for an important reason. He says that everyone is under the influence. It's not that we are facing a \$10,000 DUI fine or that we are going to have breathalyzers at the entrances of Kenwood Baptist Church, but everyone is under the influence, under Spiritual influence. Paul says you remember that before you knew Christ, you were really influenced, that your desires, your appetite, and your behavior were influenced by mute idols, by what you were worshiping at that time, when you were pagans. *Pagan* is the Latin word for people who are outside the scope of civilized life, those who live in the countryside, who were far off. The Greek term that he uses here is *nations*. When you were nations, not knowing Christ and steeped in idolatry, you were dragged around to desire all kinds of things that wrecked your lives, distorted your behavior, but now, knowing Christ, you are filled with the Spirit and are to be led by the Spirit. He says in Romans 8:14:

*“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.”*

Galatians 5:18 says we are to be led by the Spirit. How do you know as a new Christian, or as a mature Christian, when you are following the Holy Spirit? Paul gives us a concrete spiritual test in 1 Corinthians 12:3. He says:

*“Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”*

He has in view here all of the workings of the gifts of the Spirit. When the Spirit of Christ, this Holy Spirit of God, is at work among us, the Holy Spirit will never cause us to think less of Jesus. When you wonder, “Is this the Spirit of God at work,” Paul says the way that you can know the Holy Spirit is working is that the Holy Spirit prompts us to see the Lordship of Christ. In His own words, Jesus said that He would send the Spirit and that the Spirit would remind us of Jesus' own teachings. The Spirit will exalt Jesus. We should be highly suspicious of spiritual activity that distracts us from the Lordship of Christ. It is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes much of Jesus and leads us to His Lordship. No one can say: “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God in our life together is revealed with a variety of gifts. Last week, we talked about how the church is the setting that God has designed to display His manifold wisdom, within the context of the united church. So, the Holy Spirit has diverse gifts, and yet Paul's great burden in this section is not to give us an exhaustive list of gifts. It is not that he wants us to go home and do a spiritual inventory and think about ourselves. His intention is to show us that all

that the Spirit of God does in our midst, as diverse as it might be, flows from one God, one Lord, one Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not divide us; the Holy Spirit unites us. In Christian history, often times an emphasis on charismatic gifts has had the sad result of dividing us, which is the opposite of what the Spirit of God really does. Paul says this in three very quick ways. He says in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6:

*“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.*

*There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.*

*There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.”*

The Spirit brings us together because it is the work of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit are to be used not as individual proprietary rights, but the gifts of the Spirit are to be exercised within the context of community, to build up the church together. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:7:

*“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”*

The gifts of the Spirit are not given so that we can list our gifts on our spiritual resumes. They are not given so that we can boast to others and say, “Well, these are my gifts.” They are not given so that we can spend our days looking only at ourselves. The gifts of the Spirit are given by His will, His determination. The gifts of the Spirit sometimes are given for seasons and then withdrawn, but they are to be used in the context of community, distributed by God's own will, and they are for the building up of the church: *to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good*. Paul lists a set of eight different gifts, but his emphasis throughout is actually that these diverse gifts come flowing through the one Spirit of God. Some have a message of wisdom through the Spirit; others have a message of knowledge through the same Spirit; of faith through the same Spirit; of healing through that one Spirit; of miraculous powers; gifts of healing; prophetic gifts; speaking in tongues; and to another, the interpretation. Yet he emphasizes that all of these things are the work of one and the same Spirit, distributed by His will, not for our boasting or glory or fame, but for the building up of the church.

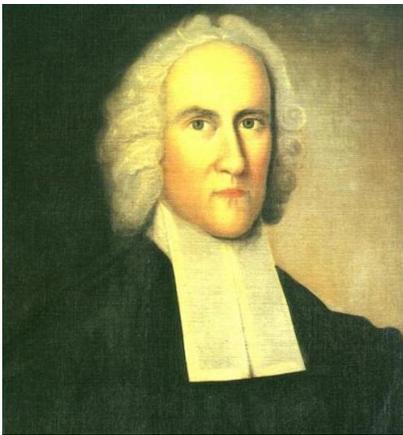
Paul transitions from this to the very natural image of the church, of the living body, functioning body. The church is alive. The body of Christ is alive. Kenwood Baptist Church is not supposed to be a static entity. This is supposed to be a place that is pulsating with spiritual life, not by our will, but by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The presence and power of the Spirit will cause us to make much of Jesus and to crave His Lordship in our lives. The presence of the power of the Spirit will result in gifts that are given out by His will to be used and exercised, and we become a living body, the body of Christ. Paul says in Ephesians 4:11-13:

*“So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and*

*teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”*

Too often we think of the spiritual gifts in individual terms, when really they're just a lavish set of manifestations of the reality of God in our midst, to be used together in the context of community. Sometimes we fear the Spirit's gifts. Sometimes they intimidate us. For some of us, the presence of the Spirit seems to push us beyond our comfort zone. Sometimes the presence of the Spirit can seem too emotional for some. Sometimes the Spirit comes and the Spirit's presence is visible, observable. Yet, the Scripture teaches us not to quench the Spirit. Sometimes we fear the presence of the Spirit because the Spirit of God will push us further out. We need the Spirit at Kenwood. The Spirit of God is present here, and we pray earnestly for God's work among us. We need more of the Spirit.

I want to share in conclusion two very different stories of how the Spirit of God is at work and has worked in the past. These are two very different individuals, different times, and yet they



are manifestations of the same Holy Spirit. In July 1741, Jonathan Edwards was invited to preach at Enfield in Connecticut. He chose the text of Deuteronomy 32:35, that “*vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.*” He preached on the reality of judgment and that people face judgment without Christ. This sermon was famously entitled: “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Jonathan Edwards was an intellectual. He put no stock in rhetorical skills. His preaching technique was unimpressive from a human point of view. He read his sermons in an even voice, staring at the back of the church. He shunned shouting and

theatrical gestures and sought to impress the power of truth and our desperate need for God. Nothing in his style or presentation could account for what happened on that night in July 1741. As he concluded his sermon to a crowd of rough New Englanders, the Holy Spirit moved and breathed over the congregation. There were audible moans and crying out in the midst of the congregation. People's voices could be heard crying out: “What do I need to do to be saved? What shall I do for Christ?” God used this sermon to launch the next move of the Great Awakening in the United States. The Spirit of God moved through the region. The Spirit did not move just that night, but the Holy Spirit began to move in the community and in the towns around. Some were critical of the manifestations of the Spirit, and Edwards wrote a very important work called: *Some Thought Concerning the Present Revival of Religion*. In Edward's reflection on what was happening, he wrote that the Spirit of God had come upon the community, not just inside the walls of the church, but that it swept through the community,

and the result, he wrote:

“There has been a great increase of seriousness, and sober consideration of eternal things; ...[people began to desire] to hear the word of God preached, ... to attend on the public worship of God. ... Multitudes in all parts of the land, of vain, thoughtless, regardless persons, are quite changed, and become serious and considerate. There is a vast increase of concern for the salvation of the precious soul, and that inquiry, What shall I do to be saved?

“The hearts of multitudes had been greatly taken off from the things of the world, its profits, pleasures, and honors. Multitudes in all parts have had their consciences awakened, ... and have also been awakened to a sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the reality of another world and future judgment, and of the necessity of an interest in Christ.

“They have been awakened into an interest in Jesus Christ. They are more afraid of sin, more careful to avoid it, careful to guard against temptation and were watchful over their souls. There is a strange alteration over almost all of New England among the younger generation who have abandoned frivolity and expressed an interest in Christ. The wealthy are dressing more modestly, and others are abandoning their habits of drinking and attending bars. There is renewal in revival that is astonishing in some towns, and people are transformed into another sort of people.”

Do you who desire to see that? I would love to see that. God opened the door for us last night to be present in Madeira—just an open door. We had a booth at the Madeira Street Dance. About ten of us were there. We served 360 slices of pizza, invited 300 more people to the hog roast and the SEEDS Family Worship Conference, and we asked spiritual surveys of people. It was very moving. One man I met early in the evening filled out the survey, and he said, “I’m not interested in the study of Jesus this fall at Kenwood because I’m already in a small group that meets in Madeira.” I said, “That’s great, brother.” He said, “I’m desiring to see God move in our community.” I said, “I am, too!” So we just stood there together in the street and prayed that God would move in our towns. Can we pray for that? When the Spirit of God comes, He gives gifts that build up the community, but He also gives gifts that will send us out into the community, and He will do this in unlikely ways.

Let me tell you my second illustration of this as we close, the story of Jackie Pullinger. Jackie Pullinger was a young woman who grew up in England. She went to a church like ours where she was exposed to being a missionary to unreached peoples. She thought that God was calling her to be a missionary, but like many people, she grew up and she forgot that zeal for missions.

She went off to college and became a student of the Royal College of Music. Then, in her early 20s, she got plugged back into a vibrant Christian church and sensed God's call to go overseas as a missionary. She applied to every missionary agency and church organization she could think of, but everyone turned her down: "You're too young, too inexperienced. You have the wrong qualifications." She was about to give up when finally the pastor of her church said, "Why don't you just go anyway?" So she bought a one-way ticket to Hong Kong in 1966. She almost didn't make it past immigration, but was allowed to enter and found a job teaching at a primary school inside the Walled City of Hong Kong. In 1966, the Walled City of Hong Kong was one of the most deprived and dangerous areas. Many of its inhabitants scratched a living by slaving in sweatshops under appalling conditions. Many sold their bodies to one another and to drug use. Many lived in fear of the infamous Triad gangs, even though most of the gang members were



just teenagers. Jackie Pullinger began to teach music, and she began to approach the people in the densely packed Walled City with the message that Jesus loved them. Many people were condescending or laughed. She set up a small youth club, and many of the boys who came to it were members of the gangs.

Many were skeptical of her at first, but she won the trust of the people as she told them that she was never leaving, that she would stay. She stayed there in the midst of immense opium and heroin abuse as people, quote, "chased the dragon." It was an epidemic in the city. She said:

"I could walk down the street and see a hundred people chasing the dragon. You had to climb over their legs. I wanted something real to offer them... not just treatment in a centre."

Jackie Pullinger began to pray. She resolved to pray in the Spirit for 15 minutes a day. After several weeks of this, the Spirit of God began to move through her and others in her growing ministry team. She said:

"Gangsters fell to their knees sobbing in the streets, women were healed, heroin addicts were miraculously set free. And I knew that it had nothing to do with me. With my

friends I began to learn about the other gifts of the Spirit and we experienced a remarkable few years of ministry. Scores of gangsters and well-to-do people, students, and churchmen, were converted and all received a new language to pray in private and other gifts to use when meeting together. We opened several homes to house heroin addicts and all were delivered from drugs because of the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Despite the power of heroin and opium addiction, the boys weren’t only kicking their habit, they were leaving it behind completely. They put this down to their commitment to Jesus. Some of the gang leaders opposed her, but over time, she won even the gang leaders over. One leader of the Triad gang came to see her, and he told Jackie that she had succeeded where he had failed and that he actually longed for the boys in his gang to be free from addiction. She told this gang leader that she did not just want them to be free from drug addiction, but she wanted them to be free from the gang lifestyle. She said if they were to be followers of Jesus, they had to leave the gangs. To her astonishment, this gang boss offered to protect her safe house. New life! More houses spread. Today, Jackie Pullinger's society is called the St. Stephen’s Society and still flourishes with work in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. The St. Stephen Society has become one of the most successful drug rehabilitation programs in the entire world, and she attributes this to the presence and power of the Spirit.

Real change, not just in us, but in our community. The prophetic promise of Scripture is that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, like the waters cover the sea. We need more of the Holy Spirit, the exercise of His gifts, within our community. I want you to do two things. One of them is really easy. I want you to give this invitation to our Hog Roast. Don't just keep this to yourself. The back of the invitation invites people to a children's worship conference and concert next Saturday. My most moving interaction last night in Madeira was with the woman who runs a dance studio for young men and women with Down Syndrome. This group of young men and women were dancing with the band. I approached her and said, “We are having worship concert next Saturday, and I think these young people would love it.” She took about 15 of these and said, “I'll give these out to my families at my studio.” I said, “We’d love to have them.” That was easy. Every one of us can do that. I want to ask you, secondly, to pray for yourself and for Kenwood, for more of the Holy Spirit. We are going to sing a song called *Spirit Fall*, and when you're ready, you can stand and pray for yourself first: “Lord, I just want more of the Holy Spirit in my life, and I'd like to ask You for more of the Holy Spirit at our church.”

Amen.