

“Ministry Diversity and the Centrality of Christ in the Local
Assembly”
Issues of Diversity
Understanding Spiritual Gifting

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Title: Understanding Spiritual Gifting – Part III: What are the Spiritual Gifts?
Text: 1 Corinthians 12:8-11
Theme: Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for the good of the body of Christ. His gifting through you serves the needs of His body.

- Your touch heals the hurting
- Your words uplift the down trodden
- Your presence encourages the fainthearted

This is what He is doing in you and through you to those around you.

Why am I teaching this?

The purpose of this paragraph is . .

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- Intellect – to help you *understand* the diversity within the body of Christ is Holy Spirit sourced.
- Volition – to help you *chose* to celebrate your gifting for the benefit of the body.
- Emotion – to help you *love* the diversity inside the body of Christ.

Introduction:

Verses 4-7 tell us that all gifting is a manifestation of the Trinity and as a result benefits the body. **How is the Trinity manifested in the gifting?** God has determined who receives what gifts and as the Holy Spirit works in and through His people this gifting the person of Christ is seen. **This is New Testament Christianity.** This is what a New Testament church looks like, it looks like the body of Christ and this look is a result of the Holy Spirit working in and through His people.

We cannot afford to sit idly by and watch the game. Non-involvement is not an option. God’s will for your life is to be in community with other believers.

Our next four verses begin to show us the rich diversity of this Holy Spirit directed gifting.

As we consider the various gifts noted in verses 8-10 let us begin by defining what grace gifts are.

I. What are the grace gifts?

“Spiritual gifts are divine enablements for ministry, characteristics of Jesus Christ that are to be manifested through the body corporate just as they were manifested through the body incarnate.” (John MacArthur, 1 Corinthians [Moody, 1984], 283).

"A spiritual gift is a sovereign [as He wills], God-given, Holy Spirit energized ability, whether natural [providentially endowed] or supernatural [miraculous], temporary or permanent, *given for service within the ministry of the local church.*" (McCune, ST, II, p. 138.)

The grace gifts are given by the Holy Spirit in order to manifest the life of Christ in the body of Christ for the good of that body. It is impossible for a New Testament Church to be completely devoid of these spiritual gifts and their manifestation.

ILLUSTRATION:

The grace gifts are food to the body. In the absence of food the body dies. If everyone has to fend for themselves the collective body suffers. Each one of us is like a gourmet chef who prepares nutritious and delicious meals for others within the fellowship.

It is as the grace-gifts are exercised that the believing are edified and the unbelieving are evangelized.

TRANSITION:

Now let us consider our passage. First, grace gifting for body unity has distinct individuality yet common connectivity (vv. 8-10).

II. Grace gifting for body unity has distinct individuality yet common connectivity (vv. 8-10)

The idea of each one receiving a gift is expanded on in verses 8-10. The “for” of verse 8 is explanatory.

There are four places in the New Testament where we are given lists of these grace-gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11).

Romans 12:4-8	1 Corinthians 12:8-10	1 Corinthians 12:28-30	Ephesians 4:11
1. Prophecy (v6) 2. Ministry (v7) 3. Teaching (v7) 4. Exhorting (v8) 5. Giving (v8) 6. Ruling (v8) 7. Compassion (v8)	1. Word of Wisdom (v8) 2. Word of Knowledge (v8) 3. Faith (v9) 4. Gifts of Healing (v9) 5. effecting of miracles (v10) 6. Prophecy (v10) 7. Distinguishing of spirits (v10) 8. Tongues (v10) 9. Interpretation of Tongues (v10)	1.Apostles (v28) 2. Prophets (v28) 3.Teachers (v28) 4.Miracles (v28) 5.Healing (v28) 6.Helps (v28) 7.Governments (v28) 8.Tongues (v28)	1.Apostles (v11) 2. Prophets (v11) 3.Evangelists (v11) 4.Pastors/Teachers (v11)

When we consider the gifting there are certain observations we can make.

A. No two lists are alike.

“No two lists are alike; in fact, only one gift finds a place in all of the lists. This would suggest that there is no well-defined list of these grace-gifts of the Spirit.

B. The lists are not exhaustive.

I personally believe that spiritual gifting is as diversified as cultures and as limitless as our infinite God. If spiritual gifting is a manifestation of the Spirit, then should we conclude that these 16 or 17 gifts are a full revelation of the Holy Spirit? This is entirely too restrictive.

There [is no] indication in Scripture that the ones named in these five lists are intended to express all of the Spirit’s gifts. [This can lead us] to conclude that the Spirit’s gifts differ at different times and at different places according to needs.” (James L. Boyer, For a World Like Ours: Studies in 1 Corinthians [BMH, 1971], 114)

“Here is another indication that the above list is not to be considered a complete and fixed listing of all the Spirit’s gifts. Verse 11 says that the Spirit gives to *every* one his own gift. Surely there must be more than eighteen or nineteen total functions needed in the operation of a complex body such as the church.” (James L. Boyer, For a World Like Ours: Studies in 1 Corinthians [BMH, 1971], 114)

C. The gifts are divinely distributed.

Notice the phrase “for to one is given.” This same idea has been and will be reinforced throughout the passage, especially in verse 11.

“The gifts were not meant to be selected by individuals or personally solicited by them, but were instead given by the Spirit as He determined.” (David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” BKC, 533)

“The gifts were not haphazardly distributed but carefully arranged according to the perfect will of God (v. 18).” (David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” BKC, 534)

“[These gifts] were given, not for personal enrichment (cf. 14:4; 1 Pet. 4:10), but for the common good of the body of Christ, the building up of others (1 Cor. 10:24; 14:12).” (David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” BKC, 533)

The Holy Spirit has given to the Church "gifted" believers for the purpose of her edification. Gifts are for service.

ILLUSTRATION:

On January 20, 1961 John F. Kennedy made this statement during his Inaugural Address, “And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

This is the same truth that is brought out in our passage today. Our need based ministries are robbing us of the joy found only in serving others.

TRANSITION:

The second idea needing to be considered are the actual gifts mentioned in our present passage. From our passage the gifts are given so that the Holy Spirit would be manifested and as a result the body would be built up. What are these gifts, what does the Holy Spirit look like and how does this build up the body of Christ?

- III. What are the gifts and what does the Holy Spirit look like and how does this build up the body of Christ?

We have already noted certain ideas concerning the gifts. Now let us begin to understanding the gifts.

Can the gifts be categorized? If the gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit, then they express His attributes and His activities. We speak of the simplicity of God when we discuss who God is and what He has done. This means that God’s attributes and activities are inter-connected. They cannot be looked at in isolation nor exist in isolation. We also speak of the idea that God is more than the sum total of His attributes. Since this is true, the gifting we see is inter-connected and they are only whispers of all that God is and is doing. I say all of this to note how any categorizing on our part is only so that we can hopefully understand God better. The categorizing is somewhat arbitrary and non-absolute. It is subjective and not objective.

My focus in this study is not to determine whether or not the gifts still exists. That will happen at a later study. This morning our desire is to note what are these gifts, what does the Holy Spirit look like and how does this build up the body of Christ. In light of this it is important to remember first . . .

“This list is not exhaustive, and [second] precise definitions of what Paul means are impossible. It is very likely that the Corinthian Christians knew what he meant.” <http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/archive/cpr021.shtml>

The gifts can be categorized along three generic lines: (1) word-centered, (2) work-centered, (3) and office-gifts. Let us consider the word-centered gifts.

A. Grace-gifts which are Word-Centered

1. Word of Wisdom

The ability to draw application from acquired knowledge. How is wisdom (Sophia) used in 1 Corinthians? The word “wisdom” is used in 25 references in 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 12:8 is the last time the word “wisdom” will be used in 1 Corinthians. It is only used once in 2 Corinthians 1:12.

There is a difference between the word of wisdom and the wisdom of words (2:1). The wisdom of words is tied into the wisdom of the wise (1:19; 2:1, 4, 5) and the wisdom of this world (1:20). The word of wisdom is wiser than men (1:25). Man’s wisdom must be abandoned and God’s wisdom must be embraced (3:18, 19). The word of wisdom is the wisdom of God (1:21). The word of wisdom is a manifestation of Christ the power of God (1:24). Through the word of wisdom the Holy Spirit is manifested in the revealing of Jesus Christ (1:24).

Somehow the word of wisdom looks like foolishness to the unbelieving and confuses them in its manifestation (1:27). Wisdom is the benefit of all believers (1:30; 2:6, 7, 13) but the word of wisdom as a gifting is unique to some. God expects His people to have wisdom (6:5). This wisdom is generic and universal to all believers. But the word of wisdom described in 12:8 is unique and specific.

The same idea is present where elders must be apt to teach, but this does not mean they have the gift of teaching. The idea of ruling is also an ability that all elders possess, but not all elders have the gift of ruling.

When you think of King Solomon as he was ready to cut the child in half was this not both wisdom and discernment? If wisdom is the ability to apply biblical principles to everyday life, then is there not a lot of overlap between the word of wisdom and the discerning of spirits?

Would not the discerning of spirits always be present when any word gift is being exercised? I think this tells us that gifts are never exercised in isolation except to the determinate of the body and there is an inevitable connectivity between the gifts.

2. Word of Knowledge

The ability to assimilate facts and information. The word “knowledge” is used 29 times in the NT. Of those 29 times only 6 are non-Paul. Of the 23 times in Paul, 16 are in 1 and 2 Corinthians and of those 16 occurrences 10 are in 1 Corinthians. The verb form “to know” is used extensively throughout the New Testament. It is used 14 times in 1 Corinthians and 8 times in 2 Corinthians.

Paul speaks of the Corinthian fellowship as enriched “in all knowledge” (1:5). Knowledge is information based. The word is used to distinguish between the believer knowing and the unbeliever not knowing (1:21; 2:8, 14). Knowledge as a stand alone virtue puffs up (8:1).

Knowledge is spoken of as ceasing in 13:8. What does this mean? Our present knowledge base is partial (13:9) but there will be a fuller disclosure in the future (13:12).

3. Prophecy

Prophecy is a grace gift, not everyone possess the gift (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10). Prophecy contained the ability to understand mysteries and apparently was identified with knowledge (1 Cor. 13:2). Again notice the inter-dependence of the grace gifts. Prophecy appears to be a temporary gifting. It was for the purpose of edification, exhortation and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3, 4, 31). The gift itself was for the believer's benefit (1 Cor. 14:5, 22). It is a gift that instructs and comforts (14:31). It appears to have precedence over the gift of tongues (14:6).

The same activity of prophecy is also described as an office of “prophet.” God has placed prophets in the church (12:28), not everyone is a prophet (12:29). Prophets spoke revelation (14:30). The gift is subject to the will of the prophet (1 Cor. 14:32).

Could a person have the gift of prophecy and not occupy the office of prophet? Could a prophet be without the gift of prophecy? Those who are prophets recognize the Word of God (14:37).

Prophesying and praying were common expressions in the church (11:4, 5). Prophecy was a highly regarded gift (14:1, 39).

4. Discerning of Spirit

This is the ability to judge between right and wrong. It goes beyond the superficial and ascertains the heart of the issue. This is seen with Peter in

Acts 5. First John 4:1 exhorts us to test the spirits and Hebrews speaks of the believer exercising discernment.

5. Tongues

The tongue is the ability to speak in a language previously unknown to the speaker. The word “tongue” simply means language. What it is beyond that is controlled by the context surrounding it. The gift of tongues without defining what it is

- was diverse (12:10),
- given to some and not others (12:30),
- must be exercised in love (13:1),
- shall cease (13:8),
- must be translated (14:2),
- could only edify the speaker and thus limit its profitability to the assembly (14:2-9),
- the gift of tongues should be accompanied by the gift of interpretation of tongues (14:13),
- unknown to the speaker (14:14),
- a sign to the unbelieving (14:22),
- not to be forbidden when done decently and in order (14:39, 40).

An un-interpreted tongue is not to be exercised in the assembly. I am not sure why a tongue would be exercised in a normal worship service if it is a sign for the unbelieving?

6. Interpretation of Tongues

The ability to understand and explain a language that was previously unknown to the listener. The word interpretation is the word from which we derived our English word hermeneutics. The gift of interpretation always accompanies the gift of tongues in an assembly.

7. Teaching (Teachers)

The word teaching is found 14 times in the synoptic gospels. It is used heavily for identifying Christ. Teaching from Christ was revelatory; teaching thereafter was instructional. After the gospels it is used 21 times in our English text.

8. Exhorting

Exhortation deals primarily with warning and encouragement. Twenty times exhorting is used in the NT from Acts 2:40 to Jude 3.

The second broad category for the grace gifts is round work centered activity.

B. Grace-gifts which are Work-Centered

1. Faith

Faith is the ability to believe God for the impossible on a daily, moment by moment basis. All believers are to walk by faith, yet there is the gift of faith that exceeds the boundaries of the normal.

Faith is an object (16:13 “stand fast in the faith,” 2 Cor. 13:5 “be in the faith”) and an action (15:14, 17 “your faith is vain,” 2 Cor. 5:7). The gift of faith in 12:9 is probably the same spoken of in 13:2 (“though I have all faith”). Faith is a part of the three Christian virtues that are often found together of “faith, hope, and love” (13:13). Faith is something we can abound in (2 Cor. 8:7).

2. Gifts of Healing

The word is used only 3 times in the NT and it is in 1 Corinthians (12:9, 20, 28). The word used only in the Gospels and not in any of the letters is the word we use in English for therapy. It is used almost exclusively by Matthew, Mark, and Luke and used only 3 times by John (1 time in the Gospel, twice in Revelation). The word used for healing to describe what Jesus did is different than the word used in 1 Corinthians.

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people” (Matt. 4:23).

“And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them” (Matt. 4:24).

“When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick” (Matt. 8:16).

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matt. 9:35).

“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” {against: or, over} (Matt. 10:1).

“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8).

Not everyone has the gift of healing (12:30). There are several passages in these chapters that will prove profitable to us as His people.

3. Miraculous Works (Miracles)

Miracles are events where God suspends the providential laws He has established for the accomplishment of His will. The word “miracles” or “power” is the word from which our English word “dynamite” comes. It is a common word throughout the NT. The cross is described as the power of God (1:18). Christ is described as the power of God (1:24). The preached Christ is a demonstration of the Spirit and of power (2:4). Our faith stands riveted to the power of God in the preached Christ (2:5). Everything about the Christian truth both in belief and in behavior is power manifested (4:20; 5:4; 6:14).

How do the “working of miracles” and the “normal” power of the Christian faith differ? Should we expect the power of God, the miracles of God in our services each week? Should I live in the power of God each and every day? It would appear from 12:28 and 29 that not everyone has the gift of miracles, although everyone is living in the miracles of God.

The way we live our lives is a testimony to the miraculous power of Christ (2 Cor. 4:7; 12:9; 13:4).

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor. 4:7).

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9).

“For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you” (2 Cor. 13:4).

To think the gift of miracles is past is to do a discredit to the NT record. I believe in miracles. I wish I had the power to lay my hands on you and call forth the miraculous, but I do not, yet this does not keep me from praying for the power of God to shake you and this place for the proclamation of His name.

4. Ministry

The Greek word is *diakonia*. It is where we get our English word *deacon*. It is used a total of 34 times in the NT. It is translated ministry (16x), ministrations (6x), ministering (3x), and miscellaneous (9x). The idea behind it is service. Ministering is something that every believer must do, yet some have the gift. When we speak of this gift there are some people within the body that

automatically come to mind. These are the people who most likely have the gift. Notice in 1 Cor. 16:15 Paul identifies the house of Stephanas as having *addicted* themselves to the ministry of the saints. This is not the same as the ministry which has been entrusted to all believers (2 Cor. 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; Eph. 4:12; Col. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:11).

The idea behind ministry is two-fold. **First**, that of service rendered within the body. This is the gift. It is extended toward the saint. **Second**, that of service rendered without the body. This is the grace. It is extended toward the sinner.

5. Giving

Giving as a grace gift is the ability to give selflessly of that which you have. Everyone must give; some however, have the gift of giving.

6. Ruling (Governments/Pastors)

Ruling is the ability of administration, not necessarily leadership. However, this does entail shepherding.

7. Compassion (Helps)

Compassion is the ability to identify with those who are hurting.

C. Grace-gifts which are office-centered

1. Apostles

The apostles were those selected by the Lord to become the foundation upon which the church was to be built.

2. Prophets

Like the apostles these individuals were part of the foundation of the church that was being built (Eph. 2:20).

3. Evangelists

These were itinerate preachers who sought to establish churches. They would be identified as our current day missionaries.

4. Pastor/Teacher

The diversity of gifting is for the enrichment of the body of Christ in its local expression. There is no such thing as “lone ranger” gifting. Each of the gifts serves a purpose for the edifying of the assembly.

The fourth point Paul makes is contained in verse 11.

- IV. Grace gifting for body unity has the good pleasure of God behind it (v. 11)

The last point in this paragraph is verse 11 (See also (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:11, 18; Heb 2:4), God is the one who empowers spiritual gifts and gives spiritual gifts.

The word “all” in verse 11 is emphatic. Spiritual gifts are all works of the Holy Spirit. Each one of us has received a gift by the sovereign purpose of the Holy Spirit.

“Given that the Spirit apportions the gifts as he wills, there is no ground for vanity, and certainly no ground to claim that there is but one worthy gift, or one that all must possess. If there is one gift that we must all possess then it is ‘love’. cf. chapter 13. The gifts are given as the Spirit wills, irrespective of our will in the matter. The Spirit ‘decides which gifts to give to each of us’.”
<http://www.lectionarystudies.com/sunday2ce.html>

Listen to how John Piper brings the centrality of the Holy Spirit out.

The major emphasis of this passage [is] summarized in verse 11: "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as he wills." This verse emphasizes two things.

[First,] is that there is one and the same Spirit behind all the varieties of gifts. "One and the same Spirit works all these things." [We see this in vv. 4, 5, 6, 8, 9].

Paul clearly wants us to get the message: we are different in our gifts and ministries and effectiveness, yes, no doubt about it; but those differences are not owing to many Spirits, or to bad faith or to poor obedience. They are owing to "one and the same Spirit." Variety is owing to unity.

[Second,] the other thing verse 11 emphasizes is that the Spirit is the one who decides who will have what gift and ministry and effectiveness. "One and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills." The Spirit who is in us and around us is also over us. He fills us and embraces us and rules us.

The Spirit is sovereign. That's the point of verse 11: he does what he wills. The diversity of gifts, the diversity of ministries, [and] the diversity of effectiveness is his doing. He is God. He is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son, and their one divine will comes to expression perfectly in his. They are one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And they build and rule and guide the Church [Emphasis added]. ("Living in the Spirit and in the Body for the Common Good," November 29, 1992. 1 Corinthians 12:1-13. <http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/92/112992.html>)

“If we return to the beginning of Paul’s discussion of the church as a body (1 Cor. 12:1-3), then we realize that the confession of Jesus as Lord will be employed for the dismantling of hierarchy, and chapter thirteen comes as no surprise: **The chief activity of the Holy Spirit is speaking in the members of Christ’s body the truth that Jesus is Lord. Any attempt to use the Spirit’s gifts as status markers or vehicles of dominating power, instead of the means to edify the church they are intended to be, pronounces another view: that Jesus is not Lord.**” (Word & World Volume XVIII, Number 1 Winter 1998 Confessing Jesus as Lord: Selected Epistles (Epiphany to Palm Sunday) DAVID FREDRICKSON Luther Seminary St. Paul, Minnesota) http://www.luthersem.edu/word&world/Archives/18-1_Pop_Culture/18-1_Fredrickson.pdf

APPLICATION (Where do we go from here?)

Each individual within His church has been given a specific spiritual gift. He gave the gift to be used within His body for the common good. From this, we can make the following observations.

1. Unity is not based on conformity. Diversity can and should flourish in the midst of intense unity.
2. There should be a deep appreciation for the gifts in other members within the body.
3. Spiritual gifts are for the common good. Each person is special and has been uniquely crafted by God for placement and significance within His body.
4. Spiritual gifts are not to be for the inflation of individual egos, but for the edification of His body.
5. God is the one who gives each of His people their giftedness. Each member is a grace gift to His church.

Questions to Ask the Text?

1. What would you begin writing [teaching] if you knew you would die soon?
2. What could you say to a dying person that would not enrage by its triviality?
3. What do I see as the dangerous conformities (inside and outside the church) that lead us away from new life?
4. What easy or common patterns seduce our attention and distract our appetites?
5. As a preacher, am I falling prey to the expectations of the church rather than living in freedom and boldness before God?

6. Am I taming Scripture or letting it tame us?
7. Do I dare name my or their beloved idols, and with wisdom, lead others and myself in other directions?
8. Am I holding up the gospel that calls us beyond the idols of self-interest to a life of joyful sacrifice?
9. In the reading of Scripture, one might consider including an Old Testament a New Testament reading, the former selection related to the latter as promise to its fulfillment.
10. You might ask yourself, what's the stage of redemptive history at which we find ourselves in this passage?
11. You might ask yourself, how do I find myself in Christ (and therefore with His church) in this story?
12. Read and hear the Bible with the church. Creeds, confessions, and a good systematic theology can all help us to see the limitations of our own narrow range of ideas, presuppositions, experiences, and longings.
13. Why am I preaching this?
14. What is the biblical idea?
15. How have I applied (or can I apply) this passage to my life?
16. How would a man, woman, married, single, youth, senior, seeker, etc., apply it?
17. Is it relevant Monday through Saturday, not just Sunday?
18. Can I give them a "take-home" application – something they can do at home, work or at school?
19. How can I show them how to do it?
20. Have I kept Christ in the application?

How to have a week of 7 Sundays – Reminders to keep it real

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

The Gospel presented

For the truth of Scripture to change your life through renewing your mind you must be in a right relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ His Son. This relationship is impossible apart from the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This relationship is built around four key ideas. They can be summed up in four words: God, man, Christ, and response.

GOD

There is a real and personal God who is both Creator and Judge before whom you will stand and give an account as both creature and criminal.

MAN – RECOGNIZE

You have rebelled against God. We've all participated in this sinful rebellion. As a result, we have alienated ourselves from God and have exposed ourselves to His righteous wrath, which will banish us eternally to hell if we do not accept the work of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

CHRIST – REALIZE

But God sent Jesus *Christ*, fully God and fully man, to die the death that we deserved for our sins – the righteous for the unrighteous – so that God might both punish our sin in Christ and forgive it in us.

RESPONSE – RECEIVE

The only saving *response* to this Good News is to believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:12; Acts 16:30, 31).

Have you turned to Jesus Christ as your only hope of eternal life? Today this can happen to you?