

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

March 16, 2021

Series - *The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul*

The Corinthian Letters

The Long Letter (First Corinthians)

Chapter Twelve – Spiritual Gifts

Text – 1 Corinthians 12

Memory Verse – 1 Corinthians 12:18

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

Introduction

Paul now addresses the subject of spiritual gifts, which apparently had been a subject of confusion in Corinth. You will notice that the gifts mentioned here in chapter 12 are gifts that, for the most part, have been done away with after the advent of the completed canon of Scripture. These miraculous gifts were used by God during this time of transition between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. Paul wanted to clear up the confusion regarding these spiritual gifts that were being both imitated and exploited by Satan:

A charismatic Catholic speaks in “tongues” and then prays to Mary.

Robert Tilton sells prayer cloths for “healing” for \$1000.00.

“Healing” services that are interpreted for the deaf.

Benny Hinn blows on people with his halitosis and they are “slain in the spirit.”

Is this of God? John said, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* (1 John 4:1). The Bereans *searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so* (Acts 17:11). If God’s people today would follow these admonitions they would not believe and participate in these practices that are clearly not in the will of God today.

We must not confuse gifts with spirituality. It seems that today as well as in Paul’s day there are gifted people who are carnal. There are lost people that are talented, and saved people that are gifted; but obviously most of these gifts and talents are either wasted or squandered for the wrong purposes. These Corinthians, though very carnal, were also gifted by the Holy Spirit of God.

Romans chapter 12 has a similar list of gifts; but the gifts listed in Romans 12 are gifts that are still in use today.

- I. **The Diversity of Spiritual Gifts (vs. 1 – 11)**
 - A. **Problems Remaining from their past (vs. 1 – 3)**
 1. Present Ignorance (v. 1)

Paul did not want these immature believers to fall prey to these tricks of the devil because of their ignorance of the true purpose of these spiritual gifts.

2. Past Influence (v 2)

These Corinthians came out of idol worship. The idols themselves were just dumb statues; but the influence behind them was demonic. It would be easy for them to transfer some of this devil worship into their Christianity.

3. Positive Tests (v 3)

- a) Must glorify the Lord Jesus.
- b) Must confess that Jesus is Lord.
- c) Must confess the incarnation. (1 John 4:1 – 3)

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." (1 John 4:1-3)

An evil spirit cannot do these things.

B. One Producer for One Purpose (vs. 4 – 6; 11)

There is one Spirit, one Lord, and one God which will use diversities of gifts, administrations, and operations for the purpose of exalting the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, the Holy Spirit will not *speak of himself* (John 16:13). Everything He does points people to the Lord Jesus.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13)

C. Many Products in their Present (vs. 7 – 11)

1. Gifts of Comprehension (v. 8)

These gifts were supernatural endowments of wisdom and knowledge granted because the Scriptures were not yet complete. This is not merely the ability to know or understand revealed truth, which begins with *the fear of the Lord*. These gifts provided New Testament truth without a copy of the New Testament. Peter tells us that today we have a *more sure word of prophecy* – the Scripture (2 Peter 1:17 – 20).

"For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:" (2 Peter 1:17-19)

- a) word of wisdom
- b) word of knowledge

2. Gifts of Confirmation (vs. 9 – 10)

These gifts were the so-called “sign gifts” which were primarily for the Jews. (Mark 16:14 – 20; Hebrew 2: 3 – 4).

"Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." (Mark 16:14-20)

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Hebrews 2:3-4)

Remember that today that *faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.* (Romans 10:17) These gifts were not infallible. (i.e. Paul’s thorn; Timothy’s stomach; Epaphroditus was sick unto death; etc.) As I said before these types of signs were always used in the Scripture during times of transition (Moses and Joshua; Elijah and Elisha; Daniel; the early church; and next - the Tribulation Period).

- a) faith – this is power with God; moving mountains
- b) healing
- c) miracles

3. Gifts of Communication (v. 10 - tongues)

The words translated tongues in the Bible are *glossa* and *dialekta*, having to do with languages. The gift of tongues was the ability to communicate the truth of God with someone who did not speak your language (Acts 2:1 – 13). Paul will have much more to say about this gift and the abuse of it in Chapter 14.

II. The Unity of the Spiritual Body of the Gift Giver (vs. 12 – 27)

A. The Real Body (vs. 12 – 13) Christ

B. The Revealed Body – The Church (vs. 14 – 27)

The illustration is now given of the physical body; which is a picture of the church. Each member or part of the physical body has a purpose and therefore a place of prominence. So is it in the church. A true New Testament church will use everybody. It will not just be a select few. Every member will be a minister of some sort.

1. Many Members
 - a. Different proficiencies
 - b. Different positions
 - c. Different possessions
2. One Person and One Purpose

III. The Diversity of the Spiritually Gifted (vs. 28 – 31)

This section will transition us into chapter 13 which deals with the supremacy of Love over gifts.

A. The Gift of Leadership (v. 28; Ephesians 4:11 - 14)

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" (Ephesians 4:11-14)

B. The Limited Gifts

- a) Apostles
- b) Prophets

C. The Lasting Gift (Teachers)

D. The Lesser Gifts

- a) Miracles
- b) Healings
- c) Helps
- d) Governments

E. The Least Gift (Tongues)

F. The Limitations of each of the gifted. (vs. 29 – 30)

G. The Love Gift (v 31)