

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF CORINTHIANS

First Corinthians – Chapter 12

Chapter 12

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant.” (v1)

Paul starts this chapter with his own teaching i.e. not as a response to the letter from the house of Chloe or the letter from the church in Corinth. This chapter starts his own teaching that he believes the church needs and to provide enlightenment.

Spiritual Gifts

With regards spiritual gifts, Paul said I do not want you to be ignorant. It is important that we know what these gifts are, how they work, and understand that the same gift can manifest in different forms in different people according to how the Holy Spirit leads.

The Holy Spirit Test:

“You know that when you were pagans, you were led off after speechless idols; however, you were led off [whether by impulse or habit]. Therefore, I want you to know that no one speaking by the [power and influence of the] Spirit of God can say, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is [my] Lord,” except by [the power and influence of] the Holy Spirit.” (vv2-3 AMP)

Paul was addressing two key points here:

1. Careless talking. He made clear that while they were unbelievers and served speechless idols, they could do whatever they like and probably speak whichever way they liked. However, they are now in a different kingdom and what you say matters!

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:35-37)

2. Words from the Holy Spirit Tested. He is making the church in Corinth understand that Jesus is always magnified by the Holy Spirit. No one who is led by the Spirit of God can say Jesus is cursed. It is just impossible. However, if led by the Spirit of God, it is easy to say “Jesus is my Lord”.

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” (John 15:26)

Multifaceted Gifts

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.” (vv4-6)

In these verses, Paul mentioned three characteristics of the Holy Spirit gifts:

1. **It is diverse.** This is simply saying: these gifts are from the same Holy Spirit although different from one another.
2. **There are differences in how these gifts are ministered.** This explains that for each gift, they could be ministered differently by different people depending on how led by the Holy Spirit.

3. **Although the same gift but there can be differences in the working, or the energy released.** The root word that is translated “activities” or in some translations “operations” actually comes from the root word: “energema” which means “the result of the energy of God in the believer”

Every Believer Has a Gift

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all” (v7)

The 3 key words here are:

1. **Manifestation.** The release of the Holy Spirit gifts has been given to each one or each believer.
2. **Each One.** This emphasis the point above. “Each one” or “every man” should have something.
3. **Profit for all.** The reason for the gift of the Holy Spirit is not for the profit of the possessor or the custodian of these gifts but for the profit of all especially for the body of Christ.

Details of the Holy Spirit gifts

“for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.” (vv8-10)

1. Word of Wisdom

"The word of wisdom is a supernatural revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the divine purpose in the mind and will of God." – Kenneth Hagin

The gift of the Word of Wisdom is an instantaneous and divine revelation of the sovereign mind, will, purpose, plan, or counsel of God concerning things of the present, or future.

This is different to the gift of wisdom like Solomon had.

2. Word of Knowledge

The gift of the Word of Knowledge is an instantaneous and divine revelation of facts past or present, or future in the mind of God concerning either heavenly or earthly matters.

3. Faith

The gift of faith may be defined as the special gift whereby the Spirit provides Christians with extraordinary confidence in God’s promises, power, and presence so they can take heroic stands for the future of God’s work in the church. The spiritual gift of faith is exhibited by one with a strong and unshakeable confidence in God, His Word, and His promises.

4. Gifts of Healings

The spiritual gift of healing is the supernatural manifestation of the Spirit of God that miraculously brings healing and deliverance from disease and/or infirmity. It is the power of God that destroys the work of sin and/or the devil in the human body and mind.

5. Working of Miracles

In the gift of the working of miracles . . . God is entrusting us with a strength, with an energy, that we do not normally have. It is the power of the Spirit of God surging through us — through our hands, our feet, our minds — causing us to do or be something that is not normal or natural to our behaviour." – Lester Sumrall

The Working of Miracles is an instantaneous and divine energizing of power upon a believer enabling him to accomplish something which by the laws of nature would be impossible.

6. Prophecy

"Prophecy is supernatural utterance in a known tongue." – Kenneth Hagin

The gift of prophecy is an instantaneous and divine revelation and utterance of the mind of God.

7. Discerning of Spirits

"The discerning of spirits is the divine ability to see the presence and activity of a spirit that motivates a human being, whether good or bad." – Lester Sumrall

The gift of the discerning of spirits is an instantaneous and divine insight into the spirit world for the purpose of distinguishing the spiritual source behind a condition, activity, person, or operation.

8. Different kinds of Tongues

The divine enabling of a believer to use a language, unknown to the speaker. The gift of tongues may be used to praise God or to utter a message from God that, supplemented by the gift of interpretation of tongues, edifies other believers. Note that "tongues" can simply mean "other languages" at times.

9. Interpretation of Tongues

Interpretation of tongues is defined as the supernatural illumination of the meaning of a tongues message by the Spirit. The interpretation gives value to the message in tongues for the whole congregation

At the Holy Spirit's Discretion

"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." (v11)

The Holy Spirit works all these things through His people for the benefits of all – distributing these gifts to each person as He wills. We can ask for gifts, but it is left to the prerogative of Holy Spirit to give as He wills.

Understanding the One Body – Different Members Principle

"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." (v12) *"For in fact the body is not one member but many."* (v14)

Paul made an illustration of a person's physical body which consists of various members in comparison to the body of Christ which also consist of various members. Each one has their function and each one is meant to do their function without necessarily becoming or imitating another member of which they are not.

Verses 15 to 18 illustrates this point:

"If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased." (vv15-18)

We Need Each Other

“And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, on these we bestow greater honour; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honour to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” (vv21-26)

The point that Paul is emphasising here is this: WE NEED EACH OTHER! If I can put this down in points:

1. No member of the body is unnecessary or not needed. We are all needed within our function.
2. Some unseen members are even more necessary than the seen or honoured members e.g. with an amputated arm or a plucked-out eye, life still goes on but with a removed heart, life cannot quite go on. Therefore, although the heart is unseen, it is of greater necessity than the parts that are visible and seen.
3. We should care for one-another as we need one-another.

Point of Diversity Made

“And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?” (vv28-30)

The point is this... We do not all have the same gifts. Some are apostles, some are prophets, others are teachers or those that work miracles etc. Each person on their own lane doing their own function in the body complementing each other.

Desire the Best Gift

“But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.” (v31)

Paul concludes this chapter by encouraging us to desire the best gifts. What exactly are the best gifts? The second part of Paul's statement in verse 31 will lead us into the study of 1 Corinthians 13.

