

TITLE: SPIRITUAL GIFTS 101

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 12

INTRO: The context (ch. 11-14) – problems in the assembly (women’s role; Lord’s Supper; miraculous gifts). This church was rich in miraculous gifts (“*enriched by Him in all utterance & in all knowledge*”—**1:5**). But these gifts didn’t necessarily make one spiritual; they provided revelation, which was to be applied to their lives (just as we are to apply this *written* revelation). Simply having (& even reading) a Bible doesn’t make you “spiritual.” It takes application, commitment, & love. The Corinthians needed this proper attitude in order to understand that spiritual gifts were about unity, not pride.

I. SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (v. 1-6):

A. What isn’t from the Spirit – testing the spirits (v. 1-3)

(v. 1-2) *Ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb* (mute, w/out voice) *idols, even as you were led*. Remember those false prophets/leaders you followed. *Verse 3 is a comparison of these men to God’s Holy Spirit inspired leaders.

(v. 3) *No man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed*. Why say this? Who would call Jesus accursed, other than those false prophets/priests who are trying to lead them to “dumb idols” (v. 2)? They clearly are **not** speaking by the Spirit of God. *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit*. Does everyone that says, “Jesus is Lord” have the Holy Spirit? No (**Mt 7:21-23** – many will say, Lord, Lord...; **Lk 6:46**—*Why do you call me Lord, and don’t do what I say?*)! He’s talking about “religious” leaders of the day who didn’t believe in Jesus, but worshipped idols. In accordance with their beliefs (their “gods”), they **could not** make this statement. *It is assumed here that those who believe & confess that Jesus is Lord will obey Him!

B. What is from the Spirit – different gifts; different ministries (needs); different purposes (effects) (v. 4-6)

(v. 4) *There are diversities of* (different) *gifts, but the same Spirit* (**Eph 4:4**—“one Spirit”). These gifts are discussed in v. 8-10.

(v. 5) *There are differences of* (different) *administrations* (ministries/works/needs)...*same Lord* (**Eph 4:5**—one Lord).

(v. 6) *There are diversities of* (different) *operations* (effects, workings); i.e., different ways these gifts are done or put to use (e.g., “working” of miracles-**v.10**), *but it is the same God which worketh all in all* (**Eph 4:6**—“one God”). God is still the source & power behind what is being accomplished. *There are different gifts (ways), different needs, & different effects (results). But there is one Spirit, so there should be **no division** because of the difference in gifts!

II. TYPES OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (v. 7-11):

(v. 7) *The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit*. Only the apostles had **all** the gifts. Everyone else had individual gifts (v. 11), but not all. The purpose of this was for **all** the church to profit by working together. It was not intended to cause division! On the contrary, when we understand each of these gifts, we really see how each member would rely on the others.

(v. 8-10) The nine gifts given *by the Spirit*:

1. The word of wisdom (supernatural – from the Spirit) – in general, wisdom is the ability to apply & use knowledge.
2. The word of knowledge (the learning of information miraculously given by the Spirit)
3. Faith – this leads many (Calvinists) to claim that today faith is a gift (i.e., God predestined you, then gives you the “gift of faith,” allowing you to believe). But this gift of faith was given to those who were already Christians! So Calvinism is false. Also **Rom 10:17** says “*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*”
 - a. Today Rom 10:17 applies in that we hear the word of God (which is written), then we believe & obey (if we choose to).
 - b. In the NT time (before the NT was written), faith, which is obedient belief (**Jam 2:14-26**) required hearing the Spirit’s word, miraculously spoken through inspired men. The “gift” of faith may have been the ability to hear, understand, & obey *without* the benefit of seeing the miracles performed to confirm the word (i.e., the Holy Spirit miraculously provided the “evidence” to confirm the word). (The word “faith” also includes the idea of “zeal.”) Whatever the “gift of faith” was, it is no longer available today (**13:8-13**). Yet we are certainly required to have faith (**Heb 11:6**, etc.). So the faith in this verse is different than our faith today.
4. Healing – the miraculous healing of diseases, etc., beyond and without the use of any natural medicines or remedies.
5. Working of miracles – broader term; anything done by the power of God that is impossible if limited to natural means (e.g., Moses parting the Red Sea). *All these gifts are no longer needed. Their purpose was to confirm the word (**Mk 16:20**), which is completed & confirmed (**2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:3**). When this “incomplete became complete” (ch. 13), there was no more need for miracles. Therefore we see that miracles do not happen today.
6. Prophecy – message from God (directly & miraculously given), usually, but not always, future/predictive in nature.
7. Discerning of spirits – miraculous ability to discern/judge spirits (**1 John 4:6** – either the spirit of truth or the spirit of error). We do this today with the completed word of God.
8. Tongues (languages) – the ability for someone to speak a language he had not studied (**Acts 2:4**). It was **never** gibberish!
9. Interpretation of tongues – miraculous ability to translate what is being said in another language.

(v. 11) *All these* (gifts) *worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally* (his own) *as he will*. The Holy Spirit is responsible – He is the power behind all these gifts. And He gives them as He will (wants). In other words, it was most likely random as to which member received which gift. But not all members had all gifts (v. 27-31).

* All of these gifts worked together to provide the NT church with what they needed to be pleasing to God. Giving gifts individually (rather than all of them to one or two members) was designed to cause them to work together, not to be divisive.

CONCLUSION TO PART 1: The Corinthians were ignorant about the real nature of these gifts. It seems that members were puffed up about having these abilities, claiming *their* gift was the best! This is why Paul had to address this problem and explain that gifts were for mutual profit, benefit, and growth of **all** the members together (v. 7). Though we do not have these gifts today, we can learn from this attitude we are to have toward one another – that of care and concern, seeking the best interest of each other.

III. UNITY IN SPIRITUAL GIFTS (v. 12-26):

A. The body is made up of all its members (v. 12-14)

1. (v. 12) *For as the body (physical) is one, and has many members, and all the members...are one body, so is Christ.* The body of Christ (i.e., the church) is like a physical body – many individual members making up one **unified** unit! He’s going to illustrate this shortly, because they needed the point explained to them like they were children (& many times, so do we)!
2. (v. 13) *For by one Spirit* (through the direction of the Holy Spirit’s word -2 **Pet 1:20-21**) *are we all baptized into one body* (not multiple bodies). We enter the body (the church) when we are baptized (for the forgiveness of sins –**Acts 2:38**). This is God’s plan of salvation, *whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free.* This plan is the same for **everyone!** **All have been made to drink of one Spirit** – we all have the same experience in becoming Christians.
3. (v. 14) *For the body is not one member, but many.* You’re not alone; you need each other! Contextually, each member had a gift, so he needed other members in order to benefit from their gifts.

B. The body needs all its members (v. 15-21)

1. (v. 15-16) *If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?* The silliness in thinking that this could happen is just as extreme when applied to the church. Each member needs the body, and needs to recognize his/her importance to the others. Just because you think your role is less important, doesn’t mean that it is.
2. (v. 17) *If the whole body is an eye, where’s the hearing?* The “ear” may think the “eye” is more important, but can the eye do what the ear does? The CEO may be important, but can he operate the company alone?
3. (v. 18) *God hath set the members every one of them in the body.* The design of the human body is according to **God’s** decision; it works the way *He* wants it to. This isn’t hard to understand! So recognize that the church is the same way!
4. (v. 19-20) *And if they were all one member, where would the body be?* If the all parts of the body had the same function, it wouldn’t be a body (it couldn’t live)! *But now are they many members, yet one body* – the point of **v. 12-26**.
5. (v. 21) *And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee....* Now he turns it around. Before it was a member saying, “because I’m not the more important part, you don’t need me”; now it’s the other member saying, “I don’t need you.” Both are ridiculous concepts regarding the physical body, and both are equally as ridiculous in the church!

C. The body loves all its members (v. 22-26)

1. (v. 22-23) *Much more those members which seem to be more feeble (lacking strength, weak) are necessary. Those members which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor....*
 - a. In a **physical** sense, our bodies have weaker parts (and parts **we think** are less honorable). *We bestow more abundant honor* on these (earrings for the earlobe, painting fingernails, etc.). But *God* created our physical bodies, and they are *not* to be dishonored (even the “weaker,” “less honorable,” “uncomely” parts). **ALL** parts are important!
 - b. Compare to be the *spiritual* body (church). Those members which **seem to be weaker are necessary!** Each member needs to recognize his/her worth & value to the others. And the others need to express the value of **all** members.
2. (v. 24) *God has tempered (mix together, assimilate, unite) the body together, having given more abundant honor to that which lacked.* **Physically** – smallest members are just as important (fingers, toes, hair, etc. – no part is unimportant). God has united all parts of the physical body into one, and this is an analogy for the church.
3. (v. 25-26) *There should be no schism (division, split) in the body* (obviously we understand this about our physical bodies, but this is about the church); *but that the members should have the same care (anxiety for; provide for) one for another (10:24).* So much so that *when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it...rejoice with it.* If you stub your toe, your whole body reacts (hopping, crying, rubbing, etc.). Again, it’s the same with the church (**Rom 12:15**–“*rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep*”). This is true with the church worldwide as well as the local congregation. ****Why go into so much detail about the body? Isn’t the analogy obvious? Yes! This “body” analogy is very clear, but yet the church always seems to need this message hammered into our thick skulls! We’re so affected by the “look out for #1” mentality in the world that we need constant reminders that the church is not to operate like that! Greatness = servant!**

IV. ROLES WITH SPIRITUAL GIFTS (v. 27-31):

(v. 27) *Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular* (an assigned part). You’re an individual member, but part of the whole.

(v. 28) *God hath set some in the church first apostles....* Back to the original topic (gifts). *God hath set* – as with the physical body, all of which works together in concern for itself, God has also set the order in the spiritual body (for overall edification of the body).

A. **1) First apostles** (only 13 of them – 1st priority), **2) second prophets** (messenger; spokesperson – **Exodus 7:1**–Moses was God to Pharaoh, and Aaron was his prophet), **3) third teachers** (helping the church to understand the message from the prophet).

B. Paul doesn’t number the rest, which in the context are all related to spiritual gifts: *miracles, healing, helps* (aid/relief –by some miraculous means), *governments* (church leadership), *diversities* (kinds, nations; of a family, tribe) *of tongues* (languages)– this is another proof that tongues were specific, literal languages; **they were not gibberish.**

C. The miraculous nature of these functions has ended. But in 1st century Corinth, each function (each gift) was necessary & couldn’t be done by everyone. Today there are still many functions, and likewise, they require the involvement of every member!

(v. 29-30) *Are all apostles...prophets...teachers...workers of miracles?* No! One member had one gift, while another member had another. This refutes the Pentecostal teaching that all Christians should be able to speak in tongues (their test of fellowship). Not all in Corinth could speak in tongues! But Paul says all these gifts were dispersed among all members, so all could be involved.

(v. 31) *Covet earnestly the best gifts* (explained in **ch. 14**): *and yet I show you a more excellent way* (explained in **ch. 13:1-7**).

CONCLUSION: The real message of this chapter is unity in the body (with or without spiritual gifts). Do you feel like a “feeble” or “less honorable” member of the church? Realize your importance. By giving all she had, the poor widow in **Mk 12** was able to stand out above all those who gave much more monetarily. It wasn’t her two mites that had such an influence; it was her attitude of love & commitment. And her example was noticed by the Son of God, and is here to encourage us for the rest of time!