

“Spiritual Gifts – Their Purpose”

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

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I. Introduction

- A. “When our children were growing up, Christmas morning would find the Christmas tree surrounded by gifts. They had been selected lovingly according to each child’s enjoyment and need. Each would be opened with anticipation and excitement—accepted with expressions of love and appreciation—enjoyed and used (depending on age) all day. Alas, however, (again depending on age) by evening jealousy and squabbling had begun.” – Billy Graham
 - 1. This is also somewhat true of spiritual gifts; the spiritually immature wind up eyeing with a bit of jealousy gifts that they have not received
- B. The public worship in the church of Corinth was plagued with problems
 - 1. Women were worshipping without their heads covered
 - 2. There was disorder at the Lord’s supper
 - 3. They were abusing spiritual gifts, especially the gifts of tongues
- C. Paul now seeks to correct their misuse of spiritual gifts in chapters 12-14
 - 1. Chapter 12- The relationship of the gifts to each other within the body of Christ
 - 2. Chapter 13- Their relationship to love
 - 3. Chapter 14- The contrast of tongues and prophecy

II. Problems with the Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-3)

- A. The problem of spiritual ignorance (v. 1)
 - 1. “Now concerning spiritual matters”
 - 2. People are ignorant of who the Holy Spirit is
 - 3. People also think that spiritual gifts are a mark of spirituality
 - a) (1 Corinthians 3:1)
- B. The problems of their pagan past (v. 2)
 - 1. In their past, they had been dominated by Satan and demons
 - a) “Carried away” (v. 2)
- C. The problem of professing Christians (v. 3)
 - 1. Paul informed them that no person speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit would proclaim a heretical doctrine about Jesus Christ
 - 2. Jesus only doctrine
 - 3. Only a true Christian can properly proclaim the deity of Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord
 - a) The Jesus test

III. The Source and Purpose of Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

- A. In this passage, Paul explains that the Spirit gives a variety of gifts to be used in a variety of ministries, that have a variety of effects, but they all have a common purpose and a common source, the true God
 - 1. Varieties of gifts (v. 4)

- a) How many gifts are there?
 1. We don't know for sure
 2. (Romans 12)
 3. (1 Corinthians 12)
 4. (Ephesians 4)
 5. (1 Peter 4)
- b) Four different categories
 1. Special gifts
 - a. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers
 2. Speaking gifts
 - a. Prophecy, teaching, exhortation, word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge
 3. Serving gifts
 - a. Serving, helping, leadership, administration, giving, showing mercy, discerning of spirits, faith, and hospitality
 4. Sign gifts
 - a. Tongues, interpretation of tongues, miracles, healing
 5. All these varieties of gifts, yet they all come from the same source- the Holy Spirit
2. Varieties of ministries (v. 5)
 - a) Administrations
 1. We get the word "deacon"
 2. Paul is saying that the same gift can work in different ways in different people
 - a. Use it faithfully
 - b. For God's glory
 - c. (1 Peter 4:10)
 3. The source is the "same Lord"
3. Varieties of effects (v. 6)
 - a) "Operations" is "what is worked out or energized"
 1. The source of the power or work is God
 2. The gifts are energized by God
 3. Trinity
 - a. Spirit (v. 4)
 - b. Lord (v. 5)
 - c. God the Father (v. 6)
4. The one source and one purpose (v. 7)
 - a) Grace
 1. Given that the most common Greek word for gifts is "charisma"
 - a. The word is related to grace
 2. Spiritual gifts are unmerited, gracious provision from the Lord
 - a. Not a reward for our goodness
 - b) Every believer has at least one gift
 1. In the Greek text, "to every man" is in the emphatic first positive of the verse
 - a. No Christian is excluded
 - c) The gifts are given for the common good of all (v. 7)
 1. To profit withal

- a. Not to show off
 - b. Not toys to fight over
 - c. Tools to build up
- 2. Every believer must use their gifts to build up the church
 - a. Are you?
 - b. You can't know if you don't come to the fellowship
 - c. Are others profiting from your gifts?
 - d. "There's a clever young fellow named Somebody Else. There's nothing this fellow can't do. He's busy from morning till way late at night. Just substituting for you. When asked to do this or to do that, so often you are set to reply, 'Get Somebody Else, Mr. Chairman, he'll do it much better than I.' There's so much to do in our parish, so much, and the workers are few. Somebody Else gets worried and worn, just substituting for you. So next time you're asked to do something worthwhile, come up with this honest reply: 'If Somebody Else can give time and support, it's obviously true, so can I.'"

IV. The Specific Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

- A. The word of wisdom
 - 1. Referred to the revelation of the mind of God in doctrinal, redemptive areas
 - 2. This was not learned or acquired wisdom, but divinely imparted. Paul both received and communicated this wisdom
 - a) (2 Peter 3:15)
- B. The word of knowledge
 - 1. Could have referred to the revelation of exhortations in the practical areas of life
 - a) (Ephesians 4-6)
 - 2. All Christians are justified by faith and should walk by faith
 - a) (Hebrews 11)
 - 3. The gift of faith is a special faith to attempt great tasks for God
 - a) It seems to relate to outward demonstrations of God's power
- C. The gifts of healing
 - 1. Plural in Greek
 - 2. Relates to the ability to heal the sick of various diseases
- D. The working of miracles
 - 1. Involved power over nature
 - a) (Acts 5:1-10)
 - b) (Acts 13:11)
 - c) (Galatians 3:5)
 - d) (Hebrews 2:4)
 - 2. These miracles were designed to authenticate the divine spokesman
 - a) (2 Corinthians 12:12)
- E. The gift of prophecy
 - 1. Involved both foretelling and forthtelling the communication of a message direct from God to men
 - 2. The foundation of the church was laid by the apostles and the prophets

- a) (Ephesians 2:20)
- b) (Acts 11:28)
- c) (Acts 19:16)
- d) (Acts 21:11)

F. The gift of tongues

- 1. Was the Spirit-given ability to speak in known, foreign languages (unknown and unlearned by the speaker)
- 2. The content involved the revelation of divine mysteries marked by magnifying God

G. The gift of interpretation

- 1. The translation of the tongue's utterance into the common language by one who did not know the language of the tongue's speaker
- 2. The Holy Spirit decides which gift to give you (v. 11)
 - a) His choices are sovereign
 - b) Don't complain
 - c) Don't be jealous of other gifts

V. Conclusion

A. How do you discern your gift?

- 1. Make sure you are a Christian
- 2. Surrender to the Holy Spirit
- 3. Start serving in the body
 - a) Others will see it