

1st Corinthians Chapter 12

Chapter 12

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Verse 1.

Now concerning Spiritual gifts Brethren I would not have you ignorant.

This is the second subject for correction in the Corinthian church, the first, in chapter 11 referring to the misuse of, and the behaviour at the Lord's Table. It is believed this subject was written about in a letter to Paul, so some in the church were keen to get the truth about the use of Spiritual Gifts. There is no doubt the church was rich in gifts but their use was scandalously out of order which disturbed some of the more discerning. Paul did not want any of the church to be ignorant on the use of these gifts, after all they were given by God to correct, edify and build up His Church.

Verse 2

You know that you were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as you were led.

Paul reminds them that previous to their conversion to the Christian faith they were heathens, *carried away*, blindly taken hither and thither at the will of their false leaders. Now you have found faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and have come under the preaching of the truth, you have, in your passion been led into senseless worship of dumb idols. Paul shows the futility of worshipping dumb gods, one that could never speak the truth. Not only the image could not speak the truth but the god or demon that the idol pretended to be could not speak the truth either. Full proof that the idol was nothing in this world and the worship of such was a waste of time.

Verse 3

Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit.

Both Jews and Gentiles blasphemed Jesus as an imposter. Jesus proved himself to be the Christ by both miracles and His doctrine. No man could, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit call Jesus a deceiver or indeed a person worthy of death as the Jews did. Equally a person who is under the influence of Satan cannot call Jesus Lord.

I was with a minister once who was praying for a lady possessed of an evil spirit. When in her right mind she was able to tell us she wanted to be rid of this troublesome 'thing' in her life. We prayed and prayed, explained salvation to her again and we thought we had won. The minister knew this scripture and asked the lady to honour Jesus as Lord, but she couldn't do it. She stumbled, she spat, she swore but the demon in her just would not let her honour Jesus as Lord. It took a lot more prayer and praising God on our behalf and after a lot more time eventually the dear lady was released and she ended up praising God with us. You may not have met up with such things, let me tell you the devil is real and can bring a person down to a lost eternity, if you come across this make sure you have an experienced Pastor with you. We cannot attest the truth of the doctrine of Christ except by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and enlightens the mind, changes the heart of the hearer, filling them with the peace and love of God.

Verse 4,5,6

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5. And there are differences of administrations but the same Lord. 6. And there are diversities of operations, but by the same God which worketh all in all.

So the work of the Divine Trinity is three fold:

1. Spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit.
2. The administration of those gifts by Jesus Christ
3. The operation by God the Father

Here are some of the ministries of the Holy Spirit.

He glorifies Jesus (v3. John 16: 13-14)

He inspires manifestations (v7, 11)

He forms the body of Christ (v13)

He imparts love (v13: 1-13, Romans 5:5)

He edifies by prophecy (chap; 14:3-31)

Verse 5, differences of administration, the Greek word 'diakonion' explains this as services, ministries, and offices all given by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 6, diversities of operations, the Greek word 'energema' is workings or operations and this word is only used in this verse and verse 10. Operations is the work of God He works the miraculous, the expulsion of demons, healing, raising the dead etc. but He is the fountain of all goodness and power He works all in all overseeing the work of the Spirit and of Christ.

Some facts and questions

Who may have these gifts?

Every believer in Christ. (V8-11. Rom.1:11. 12:3-8. John 7: 37-39)

Can a person have all the gifts?

Yes (Mat.17:20; 21:22; Mk.9:23; 11:22-24; John14:12; 15 :)

Can gifts be misused?

Yes (Numbers 20:7-13; Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; 14:1-40)

Can the gifts be exercised in a backslidden condition?

Yes, (1 Corinthians 13:1-3; Ecclesiastes 1:9 ;)

Are the gifts permanent or temporary?

Permanent if received as a personal gift (Romans 11:29)

Are gifts exercised at will?

Yes. (1 Cor. 14:15, 23-32. 1 Tim.4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6)

Can gifts be neglected in use?

Yes, (1Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim.1:6)

Do we need these gifts to day?

Yes, for the same reason those of old needed them (Mark 16:15-20: Acts 1:8-10, Rom, 1:11; 1 Cor, 1:7: 12: 1-31)

Verse 7

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

The visible signs of the workings of the Spirit would be seeing miracles happen, healings, words of knowledge and the like. These are manifested by the Spirit to educate the Church and the individual to build them up and strengthen them in the faith to make a strong Church to fight the enemy.

There is no doubt that if all these gifts were in operation in a Church the devil wouldn't stand a chance!

Verse 8

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.

The word of wisdom

This is a supernatural revelation given by the Holy Spirit into the divine will and purpose of God for events in the future or a situation we are about to face. God is in control of everything that man could not know or even understand. Haven't you been in a situation where neither you nor your deacons, board of directors, or Pastor has the answer but an answer is needed. Man's wisdom is weak and puny but the wisdom of God surpasses all man's understanding, that is when the Holy Spirit reveals the wisdom of God and the answer is given.

(Mat: 2:20; Lk, 22: 10-12; Jn, 2:22-24)

The word of knowledge

This is another supernatural revelation this time of divine knowledge about a person's current situation. An example of this is in John 4 when Jesus revealed to the woman at the well that He was totally aware of her marital history and he knew about her current partner who she was not married to. The gift reveals to the person that God is aware of their situation and wants to intervene. The Holy Spirit wants to show us, the body of Christ, His plans, and His will for any situation. He wants to reveal His will and purpose for a troubled soul so that we are able to tell that person what God has in store to encourage them to hold on, to fight the fight of faith and to trust. None of this knowledge could be known by anyone except it is given by the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 9:11-12; Mat. 16:16; Acts 5: 3-4)

Verse 9

To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

Faith

This is the supernatural ability to believe God without human doubt, unbelief or reasoning. It is more than the measure of faith we receive when we are born again. It is a supernatural faith that believes in the midst of a trial that the immovable will move that provision will become available that miracles will happen despite the impossible circumstances. This gift therefore works in league with the next two.

(Rom. 4:17; Mat. 17:20; 21:22; Mk. 9:23)

The Gifts of healing

This is the supernatural power to heal all manner of sickness without the use of human aid or medical intervention.

(Mk. 16: 18; John 14:12; 1 Cor. 12:9)

Verse 10

To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.

Miracles

This is the supernatural power to intervene in the ordinary course of nature to counteract laws of nature if necessary.

(Mat. 17:20; Mk. 9: 23;)

Prophecy

This is a supernatural utterance in the native tongue (1 Cor. 14:3). It includes speaking to men and women the Words of God to educate, exhort, and comfort.

It is of Divine utterance not conceived by human thought or reasoning. (Acts.3: 21; 11:28; 21:11; 2. Peter1:21). The gift of prophesy is not the same as the office or ministry of a prophet that is one of the Ephesian 4 gifts. It does not include a licence or authority to bring correction, or rebuke or guidance for a church, a region or a nation. This gift is simply to encourage and build up one another, either those who are saved or those who we witness to.

Discerning of spirits

This is a gift by which a person can discern a false spirit from a true spirit, or detect a pretender acting under the influence of an evil spirit. (Mat. 9:4; Acts 13:9-10; 16:16;) It includes the ability to see into the spirit realm, to see and perceive angelic activity as Elisha did when he told his servant to see the multitude of the heavenly host that were 'for them'. Likewise the gift reveals any influence that may be in a place, or any curses that may have oppressed a person. This gift does not give license to judge one another and should never be used with this motive. It is given so that we know how to minister into a given situation and bring release and freedom into a person's life.

Divers kinds of tongues

The ability to speak languages that one has not been taught for the immediate instruction of the gospel. It is also a supernatural prayer language with which to praise and honour God. Speaking in tongues builds up our most holy faith according to Jude. (Mk. 16:17; Acts 2:4;)

The interpretation of tongues

The supernatural ability to interpret other languages or speak in other languages so that all in the meeting are able to hear and understand the gospel, all divinely inspired by the same Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

Verse 11

But all these worketh that one and the same Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will.

These gifts are given to us by the same Spirit, the third person of the Trinity and are miraculously bestowed. There is only one Spirit who is at work with the Father and the Son and He cannot be gained or acquired by human means, all other spirits are false and are used by Satan to confuse and distract the believer in his walk with God and therefore be ineffective in the life of the individual and the church which is the body of Christ.

Verse 12-20

This is the beginning of a fairly long discourse to address the jealous and competitive spirit in the Corinthian church. Paul uses the image of the human body to do this.

For as the body is one, and has many members, of that body being many, are one body; so also is Christ.

Here Paul talks about the body being made up of many different parts and all those parts are complimentary to one another. The body would be useless if it were made up of all legs or all arms, if that were the case how would all those legs or all those arms see without any eyes or hear without ears? Paul compares the church to Christ, not Christ to the church, just as the many members, like two arms, two legs, two ears, two eyes and so on go together to make up one whole body, so the church having been equipped with the gifts we have read about above make up one whole Church which is the Body of Christ.

If I have a broken arm, my body is not complete; I am unable to function properly. My body puts a strain on my other arm where two arms are needed and the whole body, whilst not rendered useless is not a whole body. When any true believer weakens his walk with God or uses his gifts in a wrong way, the Church will not be able to function to the completeness of the whole.

Verse 13

For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jew or Gentile, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the agent that brings a person into the body of Christ by the new birth. This verse is not referring to the baptism into the Spirit, but into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who makes us aware of our sin and our need for a Lord and Saviour, thereby prompting us to repent and ask Jesus into our lives.

Just as the natural body is influenced by the soul, so the Church, which is His body and is composed of many members, is informed and influenced by the one Holy Spirit. He works and acts by his spiritual body as the human soul does in the body of the man.

Whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, we have been made to drink of the Holy Spirit which John puts in St John 7: 37; *Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believes on me as the scripture says, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

So all members of Christ's body, who are partakers of the gifts given to the Church, no matter what nationality you come from, should, having joined a Spirit filled Church bring your God given gift to offer to the completion of the Spiritual growth of that Church. But make sure your gift follows the criterion laid down by scripture and is known to the Pastor of the church, God will not tolerate false teachers or prophets.

Verse 14, 15, 16, 17, 18,19,20

All these verse illustrate our study in the last few verses. Let us look at the next verse.

Verse 21

And the eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of you: nor again the head to the feet I have no you.

Verse 22 *Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary.*

The body is not one member. Nor is the Church one member, I know many Pastors who think that if they were not at church ministering the place will fall apart. I know many Pastors who are very jealous of their pulpit and would sooner let the other gifted members live in spiritual frustration than encourage them in their gift: they are called one-man-bands and can lead to a dull Church. Thank goodness our church is not like that. Paul is showing that the gifts and graces with which their different teachers were endowed with are all necessary to the salvation of all and used collectively.

Verse 27

Now you are the body of Christ and members in particular.

The body of Christ refers to the Church and its members refer to every individual in the Church who is truly Born-again. All should be equipped for the work Christ calls them to do.

Verse 28

And God has set some in the Church first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles then gifts of healings, helps, diversities of tongues.

Verse 29

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?

Verse 30

Have all the gift of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

Paul has used the human body to show that all parts of the body are needed to make the whole function properly. No matter if it be the prominent parts like the arms, ears, legs, eyes etc. or what he calls 'uncomely' parts and 'more feeble' parts, all are needed to present a complete body. He says a person may be very good looking, have deep blue eyes and pleasing to the eye, but if he or she has a cancerous heart, or a damaged liver, the whole body is suspect. Paul then likens that to the church which is Christ's body; to make the church function properly there must be apostles, prophets, teachers, and all sorts of gifts operating in a vibrant church. He asks for there to be no 'schism' in the church but all members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers they all suffer and support or if one member is honoured all the members rejoice with them. (verse 25-26)

This principle stands to reason and is quite obvious but it is surprising that much of Christ's body is at loggerheads with itself as was the case at Corinth and time that should be spent telling our communities about Jesus is spent on patching up disputes and differences. Satan is not concerned about the Church all the time it is busy side-tracked on such matters.

Verse 31

But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I show you a more excellent way,

Paul has spent time showing the Church at Corinth a better way to behave in church and to discard the teachings of the false teaches mentioned at the beginning of the book. He exhorts them to earnestly covet and

contend for the best gifts, to fill their hearts with love for God and their fellow man and not jostle for titles offices or powers.

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Be blessed

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