

1 Corinthians 12.b – Chapter Study [Emphasis: Holy Spirit]

INTRODUCTION

As we've come now to ch. 12, we're slowing down to take a more comprehensive look at the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

Last week we saw how the Holy Spirit indwells & empowers us to live a new life, the very life of the Risen Son of God.

We saw the Jesus' ascension to the right hand of the Father means He's reigning in glory & as the Spirit empowers us, that reign is expressed both in & through us.

III. Main Body 1:18-16:18

F. The Conduct of Public Worship 11:2- Ch. 14

1. Head-Coverings 11:2-16

2. The Lord's Table 11:17-34

3. Spirituals Ch. 12

a. no ignorance vs. 1-3

b. one Giver, many gifts vs. 4-6

⁴ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

If you've been with us from the beginning of our study in 1 Corinthians, you know that the major problem troubling the church at Corinth was *disunity*.

Paul spends the first 4 chapters dealing with it.

He tells them in no uncertain terms that the many factions among them were evidence of their selfishness & spiritual immaturity.

The main area in which they were at odds with one another was in who they claimed as their spiritual leaders.

The church was divided into different groups who all lined up behind their favorite teacher.

Some preferred Peter, some Apollos, others Paul, and one group pretended they were above such pettiness by claiming Jesus as exclusively their own.

Another cause of in-fighting among them was in the realm of spiritual gifts.

As we'll see a bit later, when the church gathered for corporate worship, it was chaotic.

With many of the members wanting to focus of attention on them as they used their gifts.

So the Holy Spirit, Whose whole goal is to glorify Christ & bring people together into unity in Him, had been turned into a cause of contention & disunity.

Paul's point in vs. 4-6 is that while there are indeed different gifts – there's **One Giver**.

Let's take a closer look at his because he uses interesting words here.

⁴ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

In all 3 verses, “diversities” & “differences” are the same Greek word =

Διαίρεσις; diairesis (dee-eye-ree-sis)

It was an *allotment*, something portioned out to different people.

Think of it as a *distribution*.

Picture a dozen people standing side by side in a line.

Behind them is a forest. They need to build a house using the trees of the forest.

Their leader walks along the line pulling a large wagon loaded with tools.

He hands a different tool to each person until all 12 have one.

With those tools, they have all they need to build a house.

The word “gift” is *χαρισμάτων*; charismaton; a **specific portion** of grace.

Inherent in this gift is the idea that what’s given isn’t earned, isn’t merited or given as a reward.

It’s given solely on the basis of the favor of the Giver, and according to His desire.

The **reason** why a specific gift is given to someone lies with God alone.

⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.

“Ministries” simply means service.

In secular Greek it referred to everyday acts like waiting tables & the labor of servants.

It was activity that directly benefited others.

So, so far, we have *gifts & ministries*. We have *tools & the work they do*.

⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

“Activities” speaks of an *operation* that accomplishes an objective.

Putting all this together Paul is saying that God gives to His people different spiritual gifts.

These gifts are used in different ways & accomplish different things.

2 people with the same gift may use it differently.

Or they may use it the same way but it will accomplish a different end.

Notice how Paul identifies God in these 3 verses.

He is the Spirit, the Lord, & God; Father, Son, & Holy Spirit = Trinity.

Paul’s point in all this is the diversity in unity that’s to mark the followers of Christ.

God is in to diversity!

We need look no further than the snow to see that.

Every fingerprint is different.

There are some 6 billion people on Planet Earth & every one of us is unique, even identical twins carry subtle differences.

God Himself is not one person – He is 3; one God, 3 persons; Father, Son & Spirit.

It’s out of this diversity that *unity is possible*.

Unity requires that there be more than one.

There can be no unity without multiplicity. With more than one, there’s the *potential* for unity.

The Moldau is a beautiful composition by Smetana.

It begins with a single flute. Then another flute joins in a counterpoint melody. Then another & another.

They weave around one another then come together in unison.

Then some violins join, followed by cellos, violas, and basses.

The woodwinds, brass, and percussion add their voices & make a beautiful symphony that's nothing short of majestic.

As beautiful as the initial flute was, *alone* it could never have achieved the glory of the full orchestra.

But without *each instrument* contributing its voice, the symphony could never have produced such beauty.

Diversity in unity.

That's what the church ought to be, a spiritual symphony where each of us contributes our part, in unison with others to glorify God.

c. purpose of gifts vs. 7-11

Now Paul turns to speak of the purpose of the gifts . . .

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

The word "manifestation" refers to something *visible*, something *seen*.

Paul is referring to those gifts of the Spirit that are obviously supernatural.

When they're being used, it's clear their origin is God.

He goes on to list some of the manifestations of the Spirit in the following verses.

But first notice what they're for.

They're given to *each believer*, for the profit of all.

Don't miss what this implies.

It means all of us have an important role to play in the Body of Christ, because God doesn't give unnecessary gifts.

It means we need to be in regular fellowship with one another so we can USE our gifts.

It means, no matter how we might "feel" about ourselves, God considers us a vital part of His people and His plan.

Paul now gives a list of *some* of the manifestations of the Spirit.

⁸ for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

We're going to go back over this list & take a closer look at each of the gifts, but before we do, again, please note the emphasis Paul places on the sovereignty of the one Spirit in bestowing them.

As we dive now into the gifts, keep in mind what we learned in vs. 4-6.

They're used in different ways to different ends.

There's a danger inherent in defining the gifts.

That danger is that in describing them, we run the risk of *limiting* them.

So please understand that as we look now at the gifts, we're really only looking at one way the gifts of the Spirit may be manifested.

The first gift of the Spirit is the *word of wisdom*.

That it's called a "word" means this is something meant to be spoken.

Wisdom is understanding of what ought to be done.

The Word of wisdom refers to the impartation of God's counsel in how to proceed in a given matter.

A good example of the Word of Wisdom comes to us from the OT where Solomon was confronted by a difficult decision. [1 Kings 3]

Two women came claiming a young child was hers.

Solomon commanded the child be cut in 2 to satisfy both women's desire for it.

He knew the real mother would rather the child be given to the pretender than be killed.

A good NT example of the Word of Wisdom was when the Apostles of the Early church were confronted with the dispute over the fair distribution to the widows.

They said it was not proper for them to forsake the ministry of the Word & prayer to wait on tables and appointed others more gifted than they to see to the administration of charity. [Acts 6]

The Word of Wisdom is a gift that is especially important for anyone in leadership or who counsels others.

The next gift is the *word of knowledge*.

Again, it's something meant to be spoken.

It's the impartation of information that doesn't come through the usual process of the senses or even of reason.

It's simply knowledge implanted in the heart & mind by the Spirit.

We see this in Acts when Ananias & Sapphira appeared before Peter. [Acts 5]

God told him they'd lied about the sale of their property.

We see it as well when Simon offered Paul & Barnabas money to teach him how to lay hands on people so they could receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. [Acts 8]

God told Paul what Simon's real motive was, he was greedy & power-hungry.

The Word of knowledge is another gift that's effective in counseling because people often talk around a problem and spin things to make themselves look good.

It's a gift that's crucial in a culture & time that's given to deceit rather than honesty.

It's a gift that will be increasingly needed in the end times which are forecast by Jesus & Paul as being marked by widespread deception & falsehood.

Then we read of the gift of *faith*.

Since Paul has described these things as manifestations of the Spirit & that they're portioned out to individuals, this doesn't refer to the kind of faith all must have to be saved.

This isn't saving faith but a specific gift of faith that understands God wants to do something and steps out in a concrete way to be an agent through which God's will is done on Earth as it is in heaven.

A good example of this is Jonathan when he attacked the Philistine outpost. [1 Sam 14]

He understood God wanted to deliver the enemy into his hand.

But he needed to bring his armor-bearer up to speed, so he proposed a test so his companion would be emboldened as he was.

In Acts, one day Peter & John were going into the temple to pray. [Acts 3]

They passed by a beggar who'd been sitting there for years.

As he begged for alms, Peter fixed his eyes on the man, & understood it was God's will for the man to at that moment be healed.

So he reached out his hand, took hold of the man and lifted him to his feet.

The man was instantly healed!

Some years ago, a 19 young man named Bruce Olson read about a South American tribe called the Motilone Bari.

They were a stone age tribe that was killing oil company explorers & were in danger of being wiped out by government troops.

Olson sensed God was telling him to go but no mission's agency would take him.

So he bought a one-way ticket & went by himself.

His journey to find the Motilones was harrowing but he was undaunted in his goal because he knew it was his destiny.

He eventually made it, even though the native Americans tried to kill him repeatedly.

Finally accepted by the tribe, the entire Motilone nation accepted Christ & Olson was able to help them prepare for the onslaught of the modern world without losing their unique cultural identity.

The young man missions agencies rejected ended up becoming THE model for modern missions.

The next manifestation Paul gives in v. 9 is *gifts of healing*.

Be careful to note how he says it. It isn't the *gift, singular*, of healing – it isn't an *office* as a healer.

It's gifts, *plural* of healings.

The gift isn't so much the ability to heal – it's that the Spirit uses someone as the agent through which healing is bestowed on others.

It's the sick, the ill who receive the gift they need to overcome their condition.

What this means is that the label, "faith-healer" is misleading because it makes it sound as if there's some kind of power resident in a person that can bring relief to others.

The Healer is the Spirit. He merely uses some men & women as the vehicle through which His healing flows.

And remember, the gifts are given by the Spirit, according to His will, His wisdom!

That means the person used by the Spirit to bring healing to the afflicted can't dictate or determine who does & doesn't get healed.

So these guys who parade around a stage before an arena filled with thousands of people, throwing out healing to dozens at a time is questionable.

Next is the *working of miracles*.

The word "Miracle" is literally "power."

It's one of those words in Greek, as in English, you have to figure out from its context.

The way it's used here all scholars agree means *miracles*.

A miracle isn't a coincidence or some phenomena that can be explained by the laws of nature.

A miracle is a suspension of the normal rules that govern the physical universe.

A miracle might be in the form of a healing, but it's different from the previous gift.

A healing is simply a recover of health that comes through the removal of illness or disease.

A miracle is when something is *created* that wasn't there before, like an eye in an empty socket.

Or something is *instantly removed*, like a cancerous tumor.

Sometimes a miracle occurs when one of God's people needs protection or deliverance.

Eyes are made blind, sound is deadened, or angels appear.

A miracle occurs when one of God's people need provision & a loaf of bread feeds thousands, or a single gallon of gas lasts for hundreds of miles.

Both healings & miracles are gifts that are especially important for those working on the forefront of missions, pushing back the realm of darkness.

Prophecy is the gift of speaking forth the mind & counsel of God.

It means to speak His word.

We'll take a closer look at prophecy when we get to ch. 14.

Another gift is the *discerning of spirits*.

Discernment is making an *accurate judgment*; to *discriminate according to truth*.

Discerning spirits is the ability to know what spiritual influence is at work in a given situation.

Is it the Holy Spirit, the human spirit, or is it demonic?

Along with the word of knowledge Peter received in confronting Ananias & Sapphira was the discerning of spirits.

In Acts 5:3 Peter said, "Ananias, why has **Satan** filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself?"

In Acts 16, when Paul & Silas were in Philippi, he discerned that a demon was controlling a young woman who following them around.

I'm convinced that the discerning of spirits is a gift that will become increasingly important to the Body of Christ as we come to the end times because of the power of deception Jesus warned would be in place.

The next gift Paul mentions in v. 10 is probably the one that's sparked the most controversy – *tongues*.

He refers to it here as *different kinds of tongues*.

While we'll spend more time digging into exactly what tongues are in ch. 14, for now let me just say that tongues are a form of prayer or praise that's inspired by the Holy Spirit but bypasses the intellect of the speaker.

In Romans 8, Paul refers to the inner intercession of the Holy Spirit, who prays through us in a form of expression our rational minds do not understand. [26-27]

Last year at the pastor's conference in Siegen, during worship we sang a bunch of songs we sing here, but they were in German.

I don't know German, so I sang them in English.

The German speakers didn't understand what I was singing, & I didn't understand them because we speak different tongues, languages.

The Holy Spirit who indwells us gives to *some* of us a language unknown to the speaker.

What's important to notice here is that like all the gifts, tongues are given to some but not others.

There's an errant teaching that says THE evidence of being filled with the Spirit is to speak in tongues.

There is simply no Biblical basis for this.

On the contrary – Paul is clear here & in other places that tongues is like the rest of the gifts – it's given by the Spirit to whom He wills.

In fact, take a look at v. 29 –

²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

What is the expected answer? “No!”

The last gift is the *interpretation of tongues*.

This gift is the ability to translate something spoken out in an unknown tongue into the native language of others.

Again, we'll take a closer look at this when we get to ch. 14 where Paul zeroes in on 3 gifts of the Spirit, prophecy, tongues & interpretation.

He focuses on these 3 because they were at the center of the disorder & disunity of the Corinthian church.
