

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

INTRODUCTION

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**
 - c. purpose of gifts vs. 7-11**

In these vs. Paul gives a list of 9 spiritual gifts;

- the words of wisdom & knowledge
- special faith
- healings
- miracles
- prophecy
- discernment
- tongues
- interpretation of them

But it's in v. 7 that he says what they're *for* –

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

As we pick it back up at v. 12 tonight, let's remember that the gifts, or manifestations, as Paul calls them here are given

- By the Holy Spirit,
- To each one,
- For the profit of all.

Then, after listing off this list of 9 spiritual gifts, he repeats in v. 11 –

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

The Spirit works, **ALL** these gifts, portioning out to each believer, as the all-wise Spirit knows best who ought to have what gift.

As you're probably aware, there's a debate, a *controversy* really that has been raging in the church now for over 30 years.

It centers on whether or not the manifestations of the Spirit Paul lists in vs. 8-10 are still available to the church today.

One side of the debate says that these things *ended* with the death of the Apostles; the end of what is known as the Apostolic Age—the end of the 2nd Century.

Because they say spiritual gifts ceased at that time, they are known as *Cessassionists*. Their position is that the gifts were needed during the days of the early church because they didn't have the NT & depended on supernatural gifts to fill in what was lacking in the presence of the Word of God.

But once the NT canon was formed, the gifts were no longer needed.

The only scripture Cessassionists are able to look to, to bolster their position is 1 Cor. 13 – This is the love chapter, where Paul affirms the supremacy of love in all things.

In v. 8 he says . . .

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

While love endures, spiritual gifts will one day cease. Why? Read on . . .

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. [Now]

10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

Question: What is Paul referring to? What is “perfect”?

Cessassionists say it's the NT.

But when did the NT actually become the NT as we know it?

And when precisely did the gifts cease;

At the end of the Apostolic Age –

Or when the NT canon was formed?

You see, those are two very different dates.

The Apostolic Age ended about 200 AD, when the last of the Apostolic Fathers died.

The Apostles were the original followers of Jesus.

The Apostolic Fathers were *their* direct disciples who inherited the leadership of the church when the Apostles died.

These were guys like Polycarp, Papias, Ignatius, & Clement.

Again, the Apostolic Age ended with their passing from the scene around 200 AD, the beginning of the 3rd Century.

But historians are agreed that the NT canon wasn't formed as an official list of books the entire church agreed on as comprising Holy Scripture until the end of the 4th Century – 200 years **AFTER** the *end* of the Apostolic Age. [The Council of Carthage in 397 AD]

So when did the gifts cease; at the beginning of the 3rd Century or the end of the 4th?

It's not difficult to see that the Cessassionists interpretation of 1 Cor. 13:10 is wrong simply by reading on . . .

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

When is Paul referring to? *When* will we see face to face & know as we are known?

1 John 3:2 tells us –

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

The “perfect” of v. 10 isn’t & can’t be the NT canon.

It’s when we stand before Christ in glory.

Then of course spiritual gifts will no longer be needed because our redemption will be fully realized.

There’s another fatal flaw in the logic of the Cessationists.

They say the gifts were needed during the Apostolic Age because they didn’t have the NT.

But the Apostles **WROTE** the NT!!!!!!

And it was the Apostles who used & encouraged the use of the gifts more than anyone!

If the people who walked with Jesus & wrote the NT needed the gifts to fulfill their ministry, how much more does everyone else???

The language of v. 11 is clear –

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

The words “works, distributing & wills” are in the *present tense*, which is most accurately translated thus –

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

The Age of Grace, which commenced with the Death, Resurrection & Ascension of Jesus & continues until the Rapture of the Church, is marked by the continuing work of the Holy Spirit by indwelling, empowering & gifting believers.

The Word of God has not come to end the gifts, but to direct us in their proper use.

Indeed – it’s WHY Paul wrote this to the church at Corinth.

This was a highly charismatic church. The gifts were in full operation there.

But they were being used in a way contrary to the Spirit of God.

So Paul wrote, what was in fact the Word of God, to correct them in their use of the gifts, not to tell them to *halt* their use!

d. one body, many parts vs. 12-30

¹² 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.

One of Paul's favorite analogies for the Church was as the *Body of Christ*.

In fact, he takes it a step further *here* when he says that just as a body has several different members that all contribute to the one body, so also is Christ.

Note that he doesn't say, "So also is the Church" – but "so also is *Christ*."

Paul wants the Corinthians to understand that Christ is manifest in the world in & through His people. = The Church **IS** the body of Christ.

Just as Jesus was the *incarnation of God*, so in a way, the Church by the Holy Spirit is the *incarnation of Jesus*.

As Paul says in Ephesians 1, Jesus is the head, the Church is His body; the torso, arms, legs, hands, & feet.

¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

Paul refers to baptism here in its most common way as an act of *identification & union*.

That is after all the context.

He means that it's the Holy Spirit who draws & unites us to Christ.

No matter what our background or past, the work of the Spirit is the same in all.

We're convicted of our sin and shown the only remedy is the Gospel of Christ.

"Drinking" the Spirit was simply an idiom for *taking in life*.

True, eternal life comes only by the Spirit, who imparts life to all who come to faith IN Jesus.

That means the life that fills you, is the very same life that fills me because it's the same Spirit who brings that life to us.

So distinctions like Jew & Gentile have been superseded by a new life, a new way of living.

The lifestyle of the free-person is no longer *different* from the lifestyle of the slave if they are both born-again because they have the same life.

Being a Christian *trumps* all other distinctions.

Being a follower of Christ *erases* the lines that would otherwise divide & move us to live apart.

Your life is mine, & mine is yours because one Spirit indwells & empowers us both.

We are one body.

¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.

An obvious point but crucial to make because of the problems Paul sought to remedy in Corinth.

You see, the Corinthians had put a premium on certain gifts & those who had them were trying to dominate their public meetings.

Because of the obvious supernatural origin of some of the gifts, like prophecy & tongues, those with them were going off into extravagant displays, commanding everyone else's attention.

Paul wanted to bring a balance; the body isn't one member—it's many, all working together.

He illustrates that now . . .

¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ 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? ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where *would be* the smelling?

In ch. 14, Paul will deal with those who wanted to *show off*. He tells them to slow down & pull back; making sure they don't make themselves the sole focus of attention.

Here he goes the exact opposite direction & calls those with lesser gifts not to neglect them or think they don't have an important role to play.

A hand may seem more important than a foot, but the foot still has a vital role to play.

An ear may not seem as crucial as an eye, but the ear has an important function.

May the eye is more important, but it can't hear and sometimes what you need is hearing instead of sight.

At Corinth, it was those with prophecy & tongues who were dominating things.

Those with discernment & knowledge & wisdom thought maybe their ministry, their contribution to the church wasn't that significant.

So they weren't *using* their gifts.

This was a tragedy & Paul wrote to encourage them that they must not despise their gift just because others didn't give them the honor they were due.

¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

He comes back to this important truth that he's already mentioned a couple times – that the gifts we have are ordained by the Spirit according to His plan, not ours.

Mary has the gifts of discernment & the word of knowledge.

She's in a small group with a dozen other ladies.

Linda has the gift of prophecy and uses it a lot when they meet.

She regularly says something like, "Ladies, the Lord has a word for us today and it's," then she goes on to give some powerfully anointed word.

Mary listens & is blessed whenever Linda shares her gift.

Discernment tells her Linda's messages are nearly always genuine prophecy.

But her gift in the Word of Knowledge is something that only comes infrequently, and when it does, she finds herself wondering if she should share it because her speech isn't nearly as *dynamic* as Linda's.

In the last 2 months, Mary's received 3 different words of knowledge that she's sat on, because she didn't think it was as "moving" or "significant" as what Linda shares at nearly every gathering.

Mary needs to remember God gave her those gifts & they are just as important as Linda's gift of prophecy.

The people Mary was supposed to share her words of knowledge with needed desperately to hear them.

But Mary's *denigrating* her gift by *comparing* it to Linda's denied them God's specific grace.

Quite frankly, those people Mary was supposed to speak to weren't nearly as helped by Linda as they would have been by Mary.

God knows what He's doing. Let's trust Him & step out to use the gifts He's given us.

Now – you might be thinking: I'd love to use my gifts, but I don't know what they are.

How do I find out? Let's come back to that at the end.

¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰ But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. ²¹ 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."

Yet in effect, this is what was happening at Corinth. Some gifts were dominating their public meetings, not giving opportunity to other gifts to do their work.

²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

Just as every part of the body serves a particular function, so does each gift.

Sight is a crucial sense & something only the eye can do.

But when you're listening to your iPod, you need an ear, not an eye.

The eye seems more important than the hand, but if you get a lash in your eye, oh how important that hand becomes.

The eye is certainly more important than the foot, but when the eye sees an ad for *Outback* on TV, suddenly the foot becomes mighty important because it carries the eye out to the car and into the restaurant.

Every gift accomplishes a specific task, meets a specific need.

And when that need is present, it's that gift that's needed, not some other no matter how mighty that other gift may seem.

²³ And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, ²⁴ but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, ²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

Those body parts that seem less important still get their share of care.

When we take a shower, we not only shampoo & condition our hair, we wash our entire body.

There are those parts of the body that for modesty sake, we keep *hidden*.

Do we *hate* them? Do we *abuse or neglect* them?

Of course not. We spend extra time & effort on them *keeping* them hidden, *maintaining* their modesty.

Paul's point is that each member has a unique role to play in the overall all health of the body.

²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

In our bodies, it's true, if one member is in pain, the whole body feels it.

If you've ever had a tooth ache, you know how the entire body suffers when even a tiny part of it's in pain.

Conversely, if you've ever had a foot rub, you know how it can ease the entire body. [Burn victims]

The point is that as Spirit-filled believers we must see ourselves as intimately connected to one another & look out for each other in the same way that the body does.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

The words here carry the idea that they're *connected to one another* by virtue of their comprising one body.

They're not only members of the body – they're members *of one another*.

Wrapping up the analogy of a body composed of many members, Paul now applies it directly to spiritual gifts.

²⁸ 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.

He begins with some of the offices God has given to the church.

And he puts them in order with most important first.

The *Apostles* were those original followers of Christ who laid the foundation of our faith in their teaching on the life & work of Christ.

Next come the *prophets*, men and women who spoke forth the word of God in those early years of the church before the scriptures had come together in the form of the NT, which was added to the Jewish Scriptures of the OT to comprise the Bible.

Next are *teachers* whose ministry is to explain the Word & ways of God.

These are all specific offices God's given the church to bring order & structure to the Church.

Then Paul gives just a brief sample of some of the gifts the Spirit's bestowed.

Miracles, gifts of healings, and *tongues* he already referred to in vs. 8-10.

To them he adds helps & administrations.

Helps is practical assistance rendered to those in need.

Administrations is the ability to coordinate & conduct work that maximizes efficiency & enhances stewardship.

The point in all this is the *diversity of gifts* God bestows on His people. Emphasizing that diversity, Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions.

²⁹ **Are all apostles?**

And the answer is? “No!”

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?

The expected answer to all these is a resounding “No!”

Making Paul’s point that we all have different gifts and are called to honor & respect all gifts as needed.

But v. 30 also demolishes the idea popular in Pentecostalism that if you’re filled with the Holy Spirit you’ll speak in tongues.

Tongues is one gift given to some but not all.

³¹ **But earnestly desire the best gifts.**

This seems contrary to his repeated assertion that the gifts are bestowed by God as He wills.

How can he now say, “Desire the best gifts?”

The answer lies in the word “best.”

The purpose of the gifts is for the profit of all.

If you’re dealing with someone whose need is a physical healing but your gifts are let’s say, tongues & the word of wisdom, those gifts aren’t going to meet the need – which is healing.

If no one with gifts of healing is around, pray God will use you to bring that person the healing they need.

Again, the best gift is the one needed at this moment.

And yet I show you a more excellent way.

Then Paul launches into ch. 13 with it’s treatise on love which we’ll look at next week.

CONCLUSION

How to recognize & use the gifts.