

The Church of the Servant King

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Survey of the Bible Series – Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians

(SB_1Cor12A)

Chapter 12 begins a section of Paul’s letter that consists of three chapters and we can observe several topics being addressed within these three chapters.

- The Source of Spiritual Gifts (12:1-11).
- Unity, Yet Diversity Within the Body of Christ (12:12-31).
- The Necessary Ingredient of Love in the Exercise of All Gifts (13:1-13).
- The Priority of Prophecy Over Tongues & Rules for Their Exercise (14:1-25).
- All Church Worship Should be Done Decently and in Order (14:26-40).

THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IS THE HOLY SPIRIT (12:1-11)

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

Verses 1-3 – Opening Remarks

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

This section addresses another subject about which Paul had been queried by the Corinthian assembly of believers. Note Paul’s opening – “Now concerning.” Some translations read – “I do not want you to be ignorant.” Ignorance is not necessarily an indication of lack of intelligence. An ignorant person could be very intelligent, just uninformed.

Paul indicates that when these Gentile believers were unbelievers, some of them had been influenced by “mute idols” – i.e. demons (cf. 10:20). While believers cannot be demon possessed, believers can be influenced by demonic (or Satanic) doctrines of the cosmos.

The phrase “however you were led” indicates that there are different ways in which people come under the influence of demonic doctrines and thought. Here Paul is referencing their pre-salvation lives. People come under the influence of demonic doctrines when they make decisions motivated by the sin nature or when they make decisions influenced by value systems that reflect the collective conscience and consciousness of the godless masses. In the 1st Century A.D., there were different idols that provided different options for the expression of

demonic thought just as today, there are any number of options for the expression of demonic thought. Consider the following brief list as examples:

- Whatever feels good must be our guide (with its many variants). (Initially, the desires of the flesh influence the individual's choices, then those choices lead to more expansive paths that intersect with cosmic thought systems).
- Human governments have the responsibility to insure equitable distribution of wealth and a minimal standard of economic well-being for all.
- A philanthropic individual is certainly a "good" and "acceptable" person to God – especially if the world accepts that person.
- There are many different names for and paths to the same God and we all worship the same God in different ways. All religions lead to the same God – they just provide different paths.

Paul then provides a very general test that can be used to distinguish between the person who speaks under the influence of the Holy Spirit (i.e. a believer) and one who does not. It was not the manner in which someone spoke, but the content that determined its authenticity. One who proclaimed Jesus to be accursed was obviously not speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, one who proclaimed Jesus as Lord would have been doing so in this context through the Holy Spirit's influence in their life. (This is not a hard and fast rule in all contexts since some religious types who are really unbelievers can say the words Jesus is Lord – yet still be unbelievers).

Verses 4-7 – Varieties of Spiritual Gifts But One Purpose

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

The self-centered and carnal thinking that had manifested itself amongst the Corinthians in the form of sectarianism (chps. 1-4), failure to protect the witness of the church by allowing sexual immorality or incest (chp. 5), lawsuits in public court amongst believers (chp. 6), ascetic practices involving the denial of sexual relations between husband and wife that promoted self-righteousness (chp. 7), abuse of Christian liberty (chps. 8-10), distraction through focus upon the individual in church services (chp. 11A), and abuse and neglect due to a party atmosphere at the Lord's memorial observance (chp. 11B) also affected their view of the various spiritual gifts. Chaos in the local assembly meetings had become the norm apparently. Evidently, given Paul's litmus test provided in verse 3, false teachers were exacerbating the situation. No doubt these Jewish false teachers claimed to have their own revelation from God.

The Corinthian church was a diverse group of believers – diverse in backgrounds, culture and lifestyles. So, Paul emphasizes unity within their diversity as the theme in this passage.

- In verse 4, the source of the gifts is one Spirit.
- In verse 5, the various ministries are the result of the work of the same Lord (Jesus per verse 3).
- In verse 6, there are various results or "effects," but the same God the Father who is responsible for the effects.
- God the Father is said to work "all things in all" with regard to spiritual gifts among believers in the same way He works "all things" to His glory with regard to the universe in Rom. 11:36.
- The "common good" (v. 7) is a reference to the benefit that accrues to all believers of a local body when spiritual gifts are properly exercised.
- It is my personal understanding that verse 7 promotes the idea that each believer is given only one spiritual gift. Since every believer does not have the same gift, there is diversity.

Additional Points of Interpretation and Application of Verses 4-7

- Even though believers have different spiritual gifts, their gift is not to be used for selfish purposes (i.e. approbation lust, power lust, self glorification, etc.). See 1 Corinthians 12:14-17.

14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? (1 Cor 12:14-17)

- The spiritual gift given to the believer is to be used to benefit others.
- When a believer is exercising his or her spiritual gift, there is always an element of death to one's own selfish interests or desires that comes into play (cf. Rom 12:1-2).

1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:1-2)

- Each believer has only one spiritual gift (see v. 7 compared with v. 11). Also, see 1 Corinthians 12:15-16 and 1 Peter 4:10.

15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. (1 Cor 12:15-16)

10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Pet 4:10)

- Spiritual gifts are given to glorify God (Christ).
- Spiritual gifts are given for a spiritual battle.

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. (2 Cor 10:4)

- The granting of any particular gift to a believer is an act of God's Sovereignty through the Holy Spirit. We don't choose what gift we are given.

11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. (1 Cor 12:11)

- Ministry opportunities should be pursued by volunteers using their spiritual gift. When people are asked to involve themselves in a ministry (such as by a nominating committee), it can become a source of pride and division when carnal thinking occurs.
- You don't need anyone's approval to use your spiritual gift unless the area in which you desire to use your gift involves someone else's area of ministry.
- You don't need to "seek" a gift. All you need to do is to identify what has already been given to you.
- Even though a believer has only one spiritual gift, he can function in the area of another spiritual gift to the extent he has yielded himself to God (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)

- in the study and application of the Word. The more we become like Christ, the more and manifold ways we can be used to manifest Him.
- The believer should never be concerned about the results of the proper exercise of his spiritual gift. The results are the responsibility of the Father per 1 Corinthians 12:6.
 - Any two believers with the same gift may have different results. The believer does not chose either his gift, his ministry, or his results.
 - Any two believers with the same gift may have different ministries. Ministries are opportunities for gift function.
 - A spiritual gift should be distinguished from a talent. A gift is the result of a grace action on the part of God toward the believer. A talent is related to the flesh in that it is a function of a combination of genetics and the personal ambition to develop the natural inclination. Many times, one's spiritual gift will overlap with one's talent.
 - The joy one derives from benefiting others in the function of one's spiritual gift inspires further function, i.e. tantamount to momentum in the Christian life.
 - Some important distinctions should be made between "the gift", "the gifts", and "the gifted":
 - The "gifted" are gifted men and women given by Christ as victor in the Angelic Conflict to the Church (Eph. 4:7-12).¹ Note that Paul's theme of unity in diversity is maintained in Ephesians (Eph. 4:4-6). Also, note that Christ's gift of **gifted men and women** in Ephesians is different from the **gifts of the Holy Spirit** given by the Holy Spirit.

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:4-6) [*The theme: unity in diversity.*]

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says,

"WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH,
HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES,
AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."

9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (Eph 4:7-12) [*We see "gifts" being given to men by Jesus in verse 8 is related to the list in verse 11 – i.e. gifted men and women possessing the spiritual gifts of "apostles," "prophets," etc.*]

- "...it is better to think that Paul was not quoting one particular verse of the psalm but rather that he was summarizing all of Psalm 68, which has many words similar to those in Psalm 68:18. The essence of the psalm is that a military victor has the right to give gifts to those who are identified with him. Christ, having captivated sinful people by redeeming them, is Victor and gives them as gifts to the church. Whereas Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 speak of gifts given to

¹ I use the term "Angelic Conflict" occasionally in the interest of brevity. The more descriptive phrase or title for the biblically derived understanding of the relationship between human history and the conflict in the heavenly realms that resulted from Satan's moral fall has been titled: "*The Appeal Trial of Satan: A Biblical Basis for a Philosophy of Human History.*"

believers, Ephesians 4:7 speaks more of gifted believers given to the church (cf. v. 11).”²

- “A distinction may be observed in the New Testament between spiritual gifts and gifted men. While the two ideas are inseparable, spiritual gifts has reference to the supernatural powers possessed by individuals, while gifted men has reference to the sovereign placing of gifted men in the church for the purpose of ministering to the body. While the principal thought of 1 Corinthians 12-14 is that of spiritual gifts, we find reference to the bestowal of gifted men on the church in Ephesians 4:11. The two ideas are not strictly separated as indicated by the references in the Corinthian passage to both spiritual gifts and to gifted men.”³
- The “gifts” are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The primary passage in the New Testament on this subject is 1 Corinthians 12-14. However, other passages also name some (if not all of the spiritual gifts).
- Other gifts are mentioned in the Bible, some of which are spiritual and some of which are not. Nevertheless, the source is God. For instance:
 - Justification (Rom 5:15-16)
 - Eternal Life (Rom 6:23)
 - Marriage (1 Cor 7:7)
 - Blessings from God as a result of prayer (2 Cor 1:11)
 - Paul desires to impart a spiritual gift to the Romans (Rom 1:11)
- The “baptism of the Holy Spirit” (i.e. the gift of the Holy Spirit) and the “gifts of the Holy Spirit” must be distinguished. The Charismatic interpretation of the baptism of the Spirit as an experience subsequent to conversion distorts the true biblical perspective of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are eight different baptisms spoken of in the Bible. Two of these eight involve the believer and the Holy Spirit.

<u>Agent</u>	<u>Person Baptized</u>	<u>Medium (“Into” or “With”)</u>	<u>Passage</u>
Jesus	Believer	Holy Spirit	Matt. 3:11; Lu. 3:16
HS	Believer	Jesus Christ	1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:3

We will discuss the issue of the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” in greater depth when we discuss the subject of tongues.

PASSAGES WHICH DOCUMENT THE VARIOUS SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1 Corinthians 12:8-10

Word of wisdom
Word of knowledge
Faith
Gifts of Healing
Effecting of miracles
Prophecy
Distinguishing of spirits
Kinds of tongues
Interpretation of tongues

² Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians” in John F. Walvoord and Roy Zuck, editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – New Testament* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, a division of Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1983), 634.

³ John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit: A Comprehensive Study of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), 164.

1 Corinthians 12:28-30

Apostles
Prophets
Teachers
Miracles
Gifts of Healings
Helps
Administrations (Governments)
Kinds of Tongues
Interpretations

Ephesians 4:11

Apostles
Prophet
Evangelist
Pastor and Teacher

Romans 12:6-8

Prophecy
Service (Ministry)
Teacher
Exhortation
Giving
Leading (Ruling)
Mercy

Consolidated List (20 Gifts of the Holy Spirit)

Pastor - Teacher (Eph 4:11)
Teacher (Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28-30)
Exhortation (Rom 12:8)
Giving (Rom 12:8)
Mercy (Rom 12:8)
Administration (Governments) (1 Cor 12:28)
Tongues (1 Cor 12:8-10, 28)
Prophet (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10; 28-30; Eph 4:11)
Evangelist (Rom 4:11)
Apostle (1 Cor 12:28; Eph. 4:11)
Interpretation of Tongues (1 Cor 12:8-10, 29-30)
Helps (1 Cor 12:28)
Healings (1 Cor 12:8-10, 28 - 30)
Miracles (1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30)
Word of Wisdom (1 Cor 12:8-10)
Word of Knowledge (1 Cor 12:8 - 10)
Faith (1 Cor 12:8-10)
Discerning of spirits (1 Cor 12:8-10)
Ruling (Rom 12:8)
Ministry (Rom 12:7)