

Spiritual Gifts – 1 Cor 12:1-11

1 Cor 12:1-11; We've been working our way through 1 Corinthians, in order to learn from the issues in their life and church, so as to avoid them in ours
Which is particularly relevant, b/c their culture was very similar to ours
It was religious, it was fairly sophisticated, and it was thoroughly secular
Adding a sense of urgency on our end – b/c we're not immune

And having covered everything from church unity and marriage, to freedom and constraint – we now come to the issue of Spiritual Gifts (**Intro**)
Something Paul spends 3 chapters talking about
Starting with their source, purpose, and arrangement in chapter 12 . . .
And then focusing on their use in chapter 14 . . .
With an emphasis on love in chapter 13, as the most important aspect of all

All of which is so important in our day and age, b/c of the mis-use and misinformation surrounding this issue; It begs for clarity, and a return to the Scriptures
So starting with 12:1, follow along with me as I read, through v11

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

I'm not going to say much about v8-10 this week, but I do want to highlight 5 foundational principles, that Paul lays out here for our edification and maturity

The first is that . . .

A lack of knowledge leads to no good (v1-2)

He said in v1-2 – I don't want you to be uninformed brothers, like you were in the past . . .
B/c a lack of knowledge with respect to your faith, a lack of knowledge with respect to God's will – leads to no good
He says in v2 – *You know that when you were pagans* [far from God and a knowledge of him] *you were led astray to mute idols* [useless objects], *however you were led*.
However it happened, you were led to no good due to your ignorance
A lack of knowledge in spiritual things, leads to no good

Which shouldn't be a surprise, b/c it happens all the time in other areas of life
For instance in sports, a lack of knowledge leads to defeat
If you don't know what in the world you're doing, you're going to get beat

I remember going into my first basketball game as a freshman in college
The other team was shooting a free-throw, I had the inside position on the lane, and when the shot went up, the guy on the other team just shoved me right under the basket
It wasn't a foul, it was just that physical
And I was clueless; I had no idea how to play the game at that level
Consequently, we got beat; B/c a lack of knowledge in *sports*, leads to defeat

While in business, it leads to poverty
If you don't know what you're doing, you'll go broke; You'll end up bankrupt
Or in war, you'll be destroyed
If you lack intel about the enemy, or your troop strength, or the lay of the land – it won't be long before you're overrun

- And the same is true of spiritual things
A lack of knowledge about your faith, will lead you astray
Which for the Corinthians meant sensuous religious ceremonies, idolatry, and issue after issue

For us, it leads to a mushy postmodernism where feelings take precedent over fact . . .
Or a convenient relativism, where right/wrong depends on your perspective/situation . . .
Or just a meaningless spirituality with no impulse or power to change
And in the realm of spiritual gifts, it leads to mis-use and abuse
A lack of knowledge leads to no good *now*, just like it did then

Which is why we *must* be people of the Word
Reading our Bibles, studying them, and learning from those who do the same
I don't want you to be uninformed

That's the first principle; The second, is that . . .

The Holy Spirit makes all the difference in the world (v3)

Apart from the Spirit, Paul says to the Corinthians in v2, you were led astray
You were led to do and believe all kinds of crazy things
But now, *in* the Spirit, v3 – you can't go wrong
With him in your life, and *under* his influence, and *by* his authority – that's what it means to be *in* the Spirit, whether you're praying, talking, or acting . . .
If you're *in* the Holy Spirit, you can't go wrong

That's the flow of thought here in v1-3

As opposed to their former pagan days, the HS makes *all* the difference in their lives, and in their church
And he does in yours and ours as well

- Without him, you'll go astray; Wondering off into who knows what
But *with* him – you're on the Way, capital "W" Way
The way of salvation; The way to heaven; The way of sanctification
That's what the early church called it in the book of Acts – the Way
Having been made alive by the Spirit in the first place, and indwelt and sealed by his presence – you're on the Way
Running the race set before you as only you can *in* the Spirit

- Without him, on the other hand – you’ll utter blasphemy; irreverent expressions
That’s v3 – *No one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!”*
No one truly under his influence would ever say such a thing
But apart from the Spirit, you very well might
You might and probably will utter blasphemies – comments that show disrespect for
God and sacred things

Like saying, “*Jesus is accursed!*” Jesus is nothing; He’s anathema, condemned
Which, in so many words, swear words, is what you hear these days, isn’t it
Whether it’s on the jobsite, or in the locker room, or at the movies – people without the
Spirit utter blasphemies, often without even knowing it or thinking about it
And so would you without the Spirit

- But with him, and in him – you’ll declare your faith
Far from blasphemies, *in* the Spirit you’ll *glorify* the Lord
I think that’s the implication of the last part of v3 – *no one can say “Jesus is Lord”
except in the Holy Spirit*
IOW you can’t genuinely express that apart from him
It takes the life-giving, soul-quickenings presence of the HS to transform your heart,
renew your mind, and move your lips – to confess Jesus Christ as Lord
It takes the Spirit

Without him, you’ll blaspheme and curse; With him, you’ll bless and confess
It’s a sure-fire way to discern whether he’s making all the difference in *your* world
or not
Whether you’re walking in the Spirit and conducting your life *with* him, *under* him, and
by him – or walking on your own, apart from him

That’s the second principle for our lives; The third, is that . . .

Spiritual gifts should unify us, not divide us (v4-6,11a)

Look at v4-6 again – *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are
varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the
same God who empowers them all in everyone.*

Spiritual gifts are simply heightened abilities, beyond what you naturally have, to do the
work of ministry; And Paul’s point here, is that they should unify us, not divide us
That’s what our *natural* gifts in the secular world tend to do
They most often lead to competition and division – look no further than business, sports,
music, or academics; Everybody’s always trying to get a leg up
But spiritual gifts should do just the opposite – they should unify us

- And Paul gives 3 reasons for it
 - There’s 1 *source* of all our gifts – the HS
Spiritual gifts should unify us b/c they come from the same source
That’s v4 and v11; V4 says – *there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit*
And v11 – the Spirit *apportions* or gives them to each of us
 - There’s 1 *focus* for all our service, in using our gifts – that’s the Lord Jesus
There are varieties of service, but the same Lord – v5
Spiritual gifts should unify us b/c they’re intended for one use – serving the one Lord

- There’s 1 *power* for all our activities, or ministry – the triune God
That’s v6 – *there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them
all in everyone*; who enables them all, in everyone

Spiritual gifts should unify us, b/c there’s 1 *source* for all of them, 1 *focus* in using them,
and 1 *power* behind them
And that power is the HS acting on behalf of the godhead

That’s the implication when you put the empowerment of God in v6, together with the
empowering of the *Spirit* in v11
Where it says – *All these [gifts] are empowered by one and the same Spirit*

The HS is the agent of the triune God, behind every last aspect of spiritual gifts –
including their apportionment, focus, and empowerment
He’s the one who fits us, fuels us, focuses us, and fires us up to do the work of ministry;
to do the work of Christ here on earth; to be the church

- And he never stops; He never stops fitting, and fueling, and focusing, and firing us up . .
B/c *apportions* in v11, is a Greek word that indicates an ongoing activity
The HS is *always continuing* to distribute and empower spiritual gifts in us

Which means that your abilities *now*, may grow and expand in the future
Not just b/c you’ve used them, like a muscle grows with use . . .
But b/c the HS gives you more muscle; More gifts; Or more ability in the same gift

- But you can’t manufacture spiritual gifts on your own
You can *desire* them; And earnestly should like v31 and 14:1 says . . .
But you can’t make them happen yourself

Your gifts and giftedness come from God and God alone, through the apportionment and
empowerment of the HS within you
Self-made is not a label for true spiritual gifts
Which is yet another reason they should unify us, and not divide us

- Having said that, the goal is not uniformity; *Unity*, yes; But not uniformity
There are *varieties* of gifts and service and activities Paul says
Which means there’s no one, cookie-cutter way to serve the living God
And we’re not robots

In fact, it’s just the opposite – he uniquely endowed us with a *set* of gifts, that are
uniquely combined with our personality, to uniquely serve the Lord and bless others
It’s about unity, but not uniformity

Fourth . . .

Spiritual gifts are not about you (v7)

Paul says in v7 – *To each* [that’s everyone, every follower of Jesus Christ] *is given the
manifestation of the Spirit* [the outworking of the Spirit, referring to our gifts and the
service and ministry that results] *for the common good.*

Not for your *own* good; Not to make you *look* good . . .

But for the *common* good – for those around you
Those whom you serve and bless in the name of Jesus – whether inside or outside the church; believer or unbeliever

That’s the purpose of spiritual gifts – to bless and benefit others
And reveal the *giver* of the gifts; The Spirit

- We’re just the pipeline, the conduit – like this hose
Through which the manifestation of the Spirit flows, as we *use* our gifts
With the HS as the spigot, the source

And to the extent we don’t redirect our hose, our life, by using it for other purposes . . .
Or kink our hose b/c we’re using our life for sinful purposes . . .
He fills us with manifestations of himself
Ways that make himself known; Like spiritual gifts

And the more we use them, the more we draw on him, and the more he pours it on
Filling our life and empowering us for the variety of service and opp’s he presents us

- So no matter how you look at it, your spiritual gifts are not about you
And we need to be careful of using them for ulterior motives
Like – “If I serve God maybe he’ll give me that promotion I want”
Or – “If I serve God maybe he’ll re-unite me with my spouse”
It’s a *self-serving* mindset that puts a kink in your hose, and makes it all about you,
when it’s not

And then last . . .

Spiritual gifts are not menu items on demand (v11b)

The HS uniquely assigns spiritual gifts according to his *will*; *His* will; That’s v11b
All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apports to each one individually as he wills.
IOW you don’t get to pick and choose your gift

The HS gives you what he wants to give you, in the measure he wants to give it, *as he wills*; In which case spiritual gifts are not menu items available for order
“I think I’ll have *that* one;” Or, “I’ll have a #3, with extra miracles please”
That may work at Chic-fa-la, but not with God

- Nor does everybody get the *same* gift
He apports to each one *individually* – on a case by case basis
Which is especially important in light of those in Pentecostal and some Charismatic circles, who say that everyone should speak in tongues
And if you really *have* the HS, you will
And if you don’t speak in tongues, maybe you’re not really saved, or you haven’t experienced what they call a second baptism of the HS
Which isn’t biblical in the first place
So all the way around, it’s not right; We’ll talk about that more in the weeks to come

For now, Paul makes it clear in 12:29-30, that not everyone has the same gift

Are all apostles [he asks]? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?
Not only are those obviously rhetorical questions with the implied answer of no . . .
But the Greek sentence structure demands it, just in case someone tries to argue otherwise; Which they do
It’s like God foresaw the issue in our day; Imagine that
So there’s no one gift that everyone should have, nor any gift we can demand

But we’ll always have what we need (**Summary**), especially as a body of believers working together
B/c God doesn’t withhold any good gift, to accomplish what he wants

Pray – God, forgive us of our ignorance in this area, and laziness to do something about it;
We acknowledge that the HS makes all the difference in the world; So unify us through our gifts, and find us using them for the good of others
We’re content and grateful for what you’ve given, but earnestly desire more; For your glory, other’s blessing, and our joy