

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

“Concerning Spiritual Matters”

Up till now, Paul has been addressing things which are carnal. The Corinthian Christians were dividing over different teachers, allowing sinful situations in their congregation among people who were professed believers. *Insisting on their rights rather than just doing the right thing... & seeking self-interest rather than serving the well-being of one another.* – Here in Ch 12 Paul turns his attention *away* from things that are *carnal* & sets our sights *on* things that are *spiritual*. (Spiritual gifts coming to the forefront).

In Ch 12 we find the *endowment* of spiritual gifts, Ch 13 gives us the *energy* of spiritual gifts & Ch 14 will speak to the *exercise* of spiritual gifts.

Vs 1-3

You might notice in Vs 1 that the word “gifts” is in italics. What that means is that the translators added it for clarity, but originally Paul didn’t write that. Again, he’s been addressing things that were carnal. But now, he draws our attention to that which is spiritual.

The section concerning *carnal* things was *corrective*, the section concerning *spiritual* things is *constructive*. Now, because Paul zeros in on the gifts of the Spirit, that’s how the translators justified placing it here for preemptive purposes. It lets you know what he’s heading toward. But truth be told, what he’s speaking about is larger than the gifts alone. They were adept (that is, proficient & practiced) at leading a life subjected to the sinful inclinations of the flesh. What they needed was to learn what it meant to lead a life led by the Spirit of God.

What does it *mean*, how does it *look* to walk *in* the Spirit, to be used *by* the Spirit, to be mature in the things *of* the Spirit? Paul wants them (& by extension, us) to understand & grow in spiritual maturity. When the Holy Spirit is active in a person’s life, how does that evidence itself in what we might call (or consider to be) common practice? So, “concerning spiritual *matters...*”, might be a better way to understand what he’s saying here.

Be that as it may, concerning these things he says, “I do not want you to be ignorant.” What does it mean to be “ignorant”? It *doesn’t* mean that you’re a stupid individual. Meaning, you have a sub-par IQ. In fact, you may be highly intelligent. The word simply means, “to not know” or “to be lacking in knowledge or information.” You’re uninformed, or unlearned in a certain area, concerning a certain subject. Therefore, you can’t move forward, or make decisions w/in that context that are wise or perhaps even appropriate.

& It's interesting to note that of the things Paul (in his various writings) says that he *doesn't* want Christians to be ignorant of, they're in fact some of the things that Christians are *most* ignorant of... So, his concern was well-founded & obviously divinely inspired!

& They serve as good reminders for you & me to put forth our own due diligence so as not to fall into the category of the uninformed! In Roman's Ch 11, Paul exhorts us not to be ignorant of God's prophetic plan for Israel. Here in 1 Cor 12, he tells us that he'd have us not be ignorant concerning spiritual matters (then he zeroes in on the gifts). & In 1 Thess Ch 4 he says that we shouldn't be ignorant of what happens when we (as believers) die, the rapture of the church & how that all ties in w/the 2nd coming of J.C.

Start inquiring of the believers you know. Ask them if they can explain to you the prophetic plan that God has for the nation of Israel. Or how exactly the operation of the gifts of the Spirit are to be at work w/in the body of Christ. Ask them about the when/why of what the Bible says about the rapture of the church & how that ties together w/the 2nd coming of Christ & see how well that conversation goes...

Or put yourself in that place, what if someone begins to inquire of you? How well would you do? I trust that you'll run into some who have it down, who know it well. But the vast majority will need to hit you w/a, "To be honest w/you, I'm not really sure myself..." Yet what does the Bible say? *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*¹

Don't be ignorant, or uninformed when the word of God is right there waiting on you to pick up, dive in & learn from... Don't ignore it. How many people simply choose to ignore spiritual gifts today? Just say they're not for today. You know, "They were there for the apostolic age, the foundational stages of the church, but we don't need them today..." How many times have you heard that?

I have one main objective w/that view... The Bible doesn't teach it... I know that there is a Vs or 2 (& we'll see it) that people like to lean on in that capacity. But you're stretching the Vs to make it fit your narrative.

But because of so much abuse & misuse, even faking experiences in the church today, some people just throw out the whole thing & say (essentially), "That's not of God, so God must not be moving in that way today." The problem w/that perspective is that the church in Corinth was abusing & misusing the gifts, but Paul doesn't say, "Well, look, God's not doing that, so the gifts aren't for today, not if that's how you think they operate."

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (2 Ti 2:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Instead, he issues instructions, corrects their perspective so that *they can* enjoy & operate in the gifts of the Spirit as God has intended... He doesn't eradicate the gifts; he equips the Christians to understand how to operate & facilitate their use.

He says, "Before you came to Christ, you know that you were just carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led." Meaning, you were just being driven by whatever impulse happened to hit you... When he says, "dumb idols" he's not being slanderous. What he means is that the idol couldn't speak to you, couldn't truly lead you, direct you or help you in any way. It had eyes; it couldn't see. Ears, it couldn't hear. It had a mouth, it couldn't speak. So they would just follow their own impulses in the name of whatever "god" they were seeking to serve.

But being driven by your own impulses doesn't equip or prepare you for an accurate understanding of spiritual gifts & how it is that we're to be *led of & sensitive to* the Spirit of God. That idol can't speak to you, but God *will* through His Spirit... But let me say this. It's entirely applicable for us that perhaps *our* past teaching or experiences have given *us* a poor understanding of the Holy Spirit & how His gifts are to be at work in us, through us & among us as well...

& I'll say this; a sensitivity to the Spirit of God can take time to cultivate. On the one hand, we can allow a materialistic understanding to dominate our thinking. God is trying to *speak to your heart* - or place an *unction* upon your heart & you're trying to remember what you had for dinner or something because it seems that salsa is messing w/you. 😊

On the other hand, you have the individual who has an almost superstitious point of view. They think that every fleeting thought is God's direction for them or a message for someone they need to talk to... I mean, from which foot hits the floor 1st in the morning to which way to turn at the light, they hear from God on all of it! & I'm just gonna tell ya, there needs to be growth & development on both sides of that line...

But 1st things 1st. Paul says (here in Vs 3), "The 1st thing you need to know (as it pertains to the operation of the Holy Spirit in anyone's life) is that when someone is speaking by the Spirit, the content will always be edifying & glorifying to Jesus. It will never be blasphemous or in any way take your focus *from* Jesus." He's laying down a broad principle (a key principle) in helping us discern when the Holy Spirit is genuinely at work Vs someone trying to deceive you or put off like they're spiritual. Is what's going on attracting attention *to* or detracting attention *from* Jesus?

Now; he's *not* saying that no one will ever slander Jesus under spiritual influence.

But the spirit influencing such mannerisms won't be the *Holy Spirit*. A demonic spirit? Sure. But the Holy Spirit? No.

& I want this to encourage you & assure you concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Because some people are afraid to really open themselves up to God & the work of His Spirit because they're afraid they may have some weird experience. Maybe they'll start convulsing uncontrollably or acting unsensible. – & That's really sad because it shows me that you haven't really thought carefully, nor are you prepared to rely confidently upon the nature of God (your Father, who is in heaven). You're saying (w/out saying) that you really don't trust the Lord... Not truly, not totally.

Let's leave 1 Cor (for a minute) & look together at **Luke 11**:11-13 (read).

Do you understand what Jesus is saying here? As an earthly father, you have a sin nature. You're prone to do unethical, dishonorable things. Yet if your child was hungry, would you throw them a rock & say, "There kid, chew on that!" Or a snake? Or a scorpion? Of course not! **How much more then will your loving, holy, only good heavenly Father give good things to you? How much more will He give the *Holy Spirit* to you? He's not up there waiting to bamboozle you & do something super weird or terrifying to you... Your heavenly Father *loves* you... don't be afraid to open your heart/life to *all* that He has for you.**

The work of the Holy Spirit in your life is only going to *enable* you, *edify* others & *glorify* Christ. Now, if that doesn't sound good to you, then don't seek the equipping of the Spirit of God... But Jesus made it clear what the ministry of the Holy Spirit would be. In Jn Ch 15 Jesus said, **"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."**² In Ch 16 He said of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, **"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."**³ Let me say this as clearly as I know how. The Holy Spirit is all about J.C. He will *magnify* Him, *glorify* Him, *speak* of Him, exhort/encourage *reliance* upon Him.

This is why I get a little uneasy anytime there's a lot of focus upon the Holy Spirit Himself. Because He will *never* draw people *to* or place the focus *upon* or promote Himself. I understand the sentiment, but the Holy Spirit won't direct us that way. *Man* may, but *He* won't. He points us to & promotes only One, Jesus.

So if you're interested in learning of the nature of the work/ministry of the Spirit, study the life of Christ. Jesus didn't act all weird/esoteric, mystical or bizarre...

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 15:26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 16:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jesus didn't do things that were foolish or unbecoming... He might be unpredictable, or take people out of their comfort zone. But not in a weird way, more of a, "It's time to grow in your faith" kind of way.

So, no one will curse Jesus, or belittle J.C. by the Spirit of God. & No one will say, "Jesus is Lord" *apart* from the Spirit of God... Of course, that doesn't mean no one can flippantly mouth the words. Anyone can do that. But don't forget what Jesus said, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven,*"⁴ It's not about a surface profession. Making Jesus your Lord is a conviction of the soul... The Holy Spirit commands the heart/soul's obedience & allegiance to Jesus... It's about that question that Jesus asked His disciples on that day in Caesarea Philippi. Some people say that Jesus is a prophet, others a good teacher. Jesus said to them (just as He says to each heart here today), "*But who do you say that I am?*"⁵ & The only way that you're going to answer that question (from the heart) like Peter did, is if the Holy Spirit is in you. "*You are the Christ,* (the Anointed One) *the Son of the living God.*"⁶

Vs 4-6

The word "gifts" is "Charisma", it means it's from grace. It's exactly what it says. We don't earn particular enablings, God simply gifts them to us. & Being a "spiritual" gift, that tells us that it's not a *natural* ability. It's an enabling (be it to teach, prophecy, give forth a word of knowledge or wisdom etc.) by the Holy Spirit.

Paul says, "There are *diversities* of gifts". Meaning "differences" or "distinctions". Not everyone receives the same gift(s). (He mentions 9 of them in the following Vs.) However, they all come from the same Spirit... Many gifts, *one Giver*. (I should also say that even the same gift in 2 different people's lives will typically function in 2 different capacities. Meaning, God has given me a gift for teaching, perhaps He has you as well. But my gift may not be as great as yours or even function in the same context. Paul will tell us that the measure in which the Spirit gives these gifts is predicated upon His sovereignty.)

Likewise, there are differences of ministries. This seems to have in mind different "offices" that God has gifted people to function in. (Be it apostle, prophet, evangelist or pastor-teacher). Different offices (ministries), same Lord directing the service.

Diversities of activities. This word "activity" is the word from which we get our words, "energy", "energetic" or "energize". It is a word of active, miraculous power.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 7:21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 16:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 16:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Paul is saying that God will pour out His miraculous power in different ways, but it's always the same God doing the work. (Btw, I trust that you picked up on how effortlessly the Tri-unity of God is woven into this passage. Same Spirit, Same Lord, Same God.) Though there's tremendous diversity & activity, it works together in absolute unity.

Ours isn't to compare ourselves amongst ourselves, but to be faithful w/the gifts our Master has entrusted to us. (Matt 25:14-30).

Let me also say this. *Because* spiritual gifts are **not** tied to natural abilities, it means that **any** man/woman can serve God effectively. It's not about your adequacy, it's about God's ability. Satan would want you to believe you can't really serve God, not effectively. But once you understand this... Everything changes. It's not about you. It's about God working through you by the power of *His* Spirit. – You & me? We can't. God can. & He will, it's our to simply surrender to Him & He'll take it from there.

Vs 7-11

We could obviously spend ample time exploring each of these gifts. I'll give you one or two examples in scripture & I trust that will be enough to suffice your understanding.

But he speaks here of the “manifestation” of the Spirit. One thing we need to realize is that the Holy Spirit (as Christians) is *always* present in/among us. In Jn 14:16 Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will be w/us forever...

So, His presence is always w/you. However, there are times that He may choose to “manifest” His presence more apparently than others. Meaning that His presence is seen or made known. *Not* in the form of a bodily presence of sorts, but that He reveals Himself through these various enablings that He gifts to the body of Christ. (Make sense?) – So that He's always 100% with us. But should someone go from unable to walk, to completely healed in our midst, His power/presence has been made *manifest* among us.

The thing Paul wants us to realize about the gifts of the Spirit is that they're never given for the sole benefit of the individual, but for the blessing/profit of the church body. So that, the Lord enables you to walk, you better use those legs to serve the body of Christ... It should benefit us all. You have the ability to teach, you need to be in the C.M. or youth, or leading a discipleship group... you get the idea. The gifts of the Spirit should unite & edify the body, not divide the body.

& Notice “each one” of you has been given gifts. So the question you need to ask yourself isn't, “Do I want to exercise this gift?” Or, “should I exercise these gifts?” But rather, “What's the best way & where's the most beneficial place w/in the body *to* exercise my gifts?”

The 1st manifestation Paul speaks of is, “the word of wisdom”. The word of wisdom is that supernatural insight that brings a practical solution to a seemingly impossible situation. Jesus exercised this gift all the time. The religious leaders were constantly trying to trap Him in an impossible situation. (Matt 22:15-22) “Teacher, we know that You speak the word of God in truth... tell us then what You think, should we pay taxes to Caesar or not?” If He says, “Yes” He’s a Roman sympathizer & loses the lion share of the allegiance of the people. If He says, “No” He’s an insurrectionist & a rebel... He can’t win.

He says, “Throw me a coin.” They toss Him a coin, “Who’s image is on it?” “Caesar’s”. “Then render to Caesar what is Caesar’s, (but you bear the image of God) render to God what is God’s...” A word of wisdom.

Word of knowledge. Again, supernatural insight into a situation that you could never know apart from the Spirit of God revealing. In 4, Jesus encounters a woman at a well. He begins to minister to her about *living water*, everlasting life. She says, “I want this water...” He said, “Go get your husband & come here.” She says, “Sir, I have no husband.” He says, “You have said well, for in fact you’ve had 5 husbands & the one you’re living w/now is not your husband; in that you spoke truly...” She’s all, “I perceive You’re a prophet!” – He was given a Word of knowledge.

You’ll often experience this gift in a Sunday morning Bible study. You bring someone to church & suddenly whoever is teaching (be it me or whoever) will be sharing & that person your brought thinks you’ve given me a play by play of their life & that I’ve tailored my message around the day you were going to bring them. I have no idea, it’s just the Lord revealing Himself to them, that He knows what’s going on in their life (or your life)... But you’ll read in the gospels that Jesus knew what was happening in people’s hearts. Word of knowledge. You see Paul exercise it twice in Acts 27 concerning a shipwreck. Supernatural insight into an otherwise unknown occurrence.

You see wisdom & knowledge working in tandem in the 1st 11 Vs of Jn 8 when they bring Jesus the woman caught in adultery... What’s the difference in knowledge & wisdom? Knowledge will bring you insight, wisdom will lead you in the correct application of the knowledge.

“Faith” here isn’t saving faith. We all have to have that (& it’s a gift from God as well). This is that, “mountain moving” over & above faith that believes God for the otherwise impossible. Jesus curses the fig tree, the next day it’s dead from the root.

Peter sees the crippled man at the Temple gate, reaches out, grabs him by the hand & lifts him to his feet in the name of Jesus. (Acts 3).

Healing. I think we know what that is. God's healing power either given or received. We see it throughout scripture. We've seen it here. I've prayed for some people & God has healed them. I've prayed for others & they've died... That's why Vs 11 is so important, the gifts aren't always at my disposal, they're according to His sovereignty, as "He wills". Some were healed through Paul's ministry, others he left sick. Timothy wasn't healed, he himself had a thorn in the flesh...

Miracles would be when Spirit chooses to suspend the laws of nature. Walking on water, casting out demons, raising the dead, feeding 5,000 men/families w/5 loaves & 2 fish. Again, these gifts often work in conjunction w/the gift of faith.

Prophecy doesn't necessarily include foretelling of the future (though it can). It's more of a divinely inspired word from God in due season. A forthtelling of God's word. In Ch 14 Paul will tell us that to prophesy is to speak exhortation/edification & comfort.

Discerning of spirits. Is something from the Lord or not. Is this word of God, or is it the right words w/the wrong spirit behind it? Is the doctrine true or not. Is this of the Holy Spirit or a deceitful spirit? Is this person's motives pure or polluted (Acts 8:14-23).

Satan appears as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). We're to test the spirits, don't believe everything your told because the person is nice, or seems educated or whatever. How does it stack up to the word of God?

Tongues is a language of prayer & praise. Unfruitful to our understanding, edifying to our inner man. This is one gift you never find Jesus exercising... He understands every language. It can play an important role in the devotional life of the believer, but it's not to really be prevalent in the corporate life of the church (we'll see that later). & It's never to be utilized apart from one who can interpret, (which is the last gift Paul mentions here).

... I know that there are questions & confusion as it pertains to tongues & their place in the body of Christ... So we'll stop here for now & expand on it a bit more as we begin together next time...

Prayer Points:

Father we're praying for a fresh outpouring of Your Spirit upon our hearts & lives even today. You are a good, loving, kind, compassionate Father. Have Your way in us, be glorified among us...

God has so much for you, but it can't begin until there's been surrender *from* you. Christ laid down His life for you, shed His blood upon the cross, that you might be forgiven & find life in Him. Believe on Him today & you will be saved.