

***I CORINTHIANS***  
***Chapter 12:1-11***

**INTRODUCTION:**

Throughout our study of the book of ***I Corinthians*** we have studied many problems Paul has had to deal with. As we begin our study of ***chapter 12*** we find that one of the things they were confused and mixed up about was the matter of spiritual gifts.

Much of what was happening with certain gifts in the Corinthian church is very similar to what is going in our world today. With the tremendous growth and influence of the modern day Charismatic movement we find the next few chapters just as relevant as they were in Paul's day.

***Verse 1:***

Paul again used the familiar connective phrase, ***"Now concerning,"*** to show that he was moving to a new topic. Not only did the Corinthian's have problems with the position of woman and the observance of the Lord's Supper in their worship services, they also had questions about the use of spiritual gifts within the church. The church was not ignorant of the existence of spiritual gifts, but of their purpose and regulation. Paul's treatment of this problem covers three chapters – ***chapters 12 - 14.***

***"Spiritual gifts."*** - The word ***"spiritual"*** literally means, "spirituals" and speaks of that which is of a spiritual nature and origin under the control of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts are more than natural abilities, talents, or skills. They come from God and are controlled by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts are not natural, but supernatural.

***"Gifts"*** - means, "grace given." Spiritual gifts not of man, and man is undeserving of them. They are ***"gifts"*** which come from God, given to man in and by grace. They are not earned or awarded for some act of Christian service, but are undeserved and unmerited.

***"I would not have you ignorant."*** This is a phrase often used to introduce a very important subject. Paul was getting their attention and preparing them to listen to what he had to talk about because of the importance of the subject. The word - ***"ignorant"*** simply means a condition of not knowing. He wanted them to know about and understand spiritual gifts.

***Verse 2:***

Paul reminded them that in their pagan past, they had been dominated by Satan and his demons. The verb ***"carried away"*** was used for a prisoner being led away, and here it indicates they had been controlled by outside forces. That influence did not come from the idols themselves because idols were ***"dumb"***. Unconsciously, they were deceived by the world of evil spirits. When the pagan priests spoke ecstatic words in their trances they, also, were under the influence of demons.

The ***"dumb idols"*** were and are exactly that – ***Psalms 115:1-8.*** However, behind those – ***"dumb idols"*** were the evil forces of hell, the mighty spiritual powers of darkness which are always associated with every form of idol worship. Before they were saved the

Corinthians had been kept in ignorance, guided by their miserable and powerful superstitions which literally **"led"** or carried them along with irresistible force.

### **Verse 3:**

**"Wherefore I give you to understand,"** - Paul would make it very clear to them what he was about to say. Their previous ignorance, as well that portion of ignorance that still clung to them concerning spiritual gifts, made it necessary to carefully and fully instruct them in these matters. The Lord gave them and us a standard by which to test or judge spiritual gifts, and this is the reason He had Paul to write these things.

He informed them that no person - **"speaking"** under the influence of the **"Spirit of God"** would speak a heretical doctrine about Jesus Christ. Any person who would do so, would either have to be lost or under the influence of demons. Only a person controlled by the Holy Spirit can properly proclaim the deity of Jesus Christ.

The Corinthians had not only been led astray in the past, but they were also being led astray at the present time. There were some in the Corinthian church who claimed they were - **"speaking by the Spirit of God"** when they actually were calling Jesus - **"accursed"**. Instead of glorifying the name of Jesus, they were blaspheming His name. Paul very strongly states that the Spirit of God would in all ways, things, and at all times magnify the Lord.

### **Verse 4:**

Christians should know that the true source of spiritual gifts is the one and only true God. The word - **"diversities"** implies distinctions, differences, distribution, allotment, or apportionment of - **"gifts"**. The word **"gifts"** comes from the Greek word "charisma," which means talents, qualities, faculties, capacity, and abilities bestowed upon believers by a sovereign God. These were given to believers and then the believers were directed by the Lord to become a member of a New Testament church where those talents were to be used to His honor and glory.

The subject of spiritual gifts is much debated among different religious groups today. The modern so-called charismatic movement that has invaded most of the major denominations has but added fuel to the fires of debate and dissension. The Charismatic movement is now the fastest growing segment of Christianity. It is estimated that there are 20 million charismatics in the United States and as many as 460 million world-wide.

**"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."** God is sovereign in His giving of His gifts - **"God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will"** - **Hebrews 2:4**. This makes it all of grace, for not only is it a gift, but they are bestowed only upon those whom God is pleased to give it. The different gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit to the various members of a church enable it to function as the body of Christ.

### **Verse 5:**

**"And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord."** The word speaks of a servant. The idea is that gifts are for service. They are given to enable the

believer to serve God in a certain capacity. It means different forms of service rendered by individual members of the body of Christ. Each member has his own particular service or services to give, accordingly as the Lord Jesus Christ has given abilities or talents to serve. One believer may be gifted to serve God in one area and another believer gifted to serve God in another area. This is one of the reasons why an understanding of spiritual gifts is so important. The spiritual gifts each believer receives enables and equips them to serve God in a particular way and a given place.

However small or insignificant we may think our talent or gift to be, it is nonetheless to be used faithfully in service unto Christ our Head, and the Head of the church. For though we are enabled of the Lord to be of service unto men, yet it is for Jesus' sake that we do so - **II Corinthians 4:5; I Corinthians 10:31**. Again and again God's Word reminds us of who it is we serve - **Colossians 3:17, 23-24**.

### **Verse 6:**

We get our English word "energy" from the word translated - **"operations"** The word literally means, "what is worked out or energized". It refers to the working or carrying out, the putting into actual use and practice of that which God has produced within each individual member of a New Testament church - **Philippians 2:13**.

The Divine Trinity of the Godhead is here manifested - **verses 4-6**. **Verse 4** - That spiritual gifts are given by the same Holy Spirit. **Verse 5** - He says they are assigned by the - **"same Lord"** which refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Then in **verse 6** - They are energized by the - **"same God."** Spiritual gifts come from one source, but in their administrations and operations there is diversity. Note the same order in the listing of the Trinity, as well as the fact that the same basic teaching it set forth in **Ephesians 4:4-6**.

**"It is the same God which worketh all in all."** No saved person, not even one whom God has made a member of a New Testament church, will have anything to boast of when he stands before the Lord, the Judge of all - **James 1:16-17**.

### **Verse 7:**

**"But the manifestation of the spirit"** - The Greek word here translated - **"manifestation"** is found only once in the New Testament in - **II Corinthians 4:2**. Just as Paul by the - **"manifestation of the truth"** made known the truth, so here the different gifts and graces given to the members of the church, in like manner, manifest or shows the working of the Holy Spirit within the church.

**"Is given to every man to profit withal."** By **"every man"** is not meant every man without exception, but to every one here spoken of. More literally would be to say "to each one." No one member has all spiritual gifts, and no member of a New Testament church is without some spiritual ability.

**"To profit withal"** - The words are a prepositional phrase which literally means, "to bring all things together." The idea is that spiritual gifts are for the purpose of edifying, and for the common good and benefit of others. A person's spiritual gift or gifts are not necessarily for their own spiritual benefit, but for the benefit of others. The word - **"withal"**

simply means "for all." Therefore, whatsoever any member says or does that does not profit in a spiritual way, the entire church is not of God.

Oftentimes, people look at the gifts God has given others, and come to a conclusion the church doesn't need them or feel as if they would not be missed. What is not realized is that God has gifted each member with a certain way or gift to bring benefit to others. When a person with a God given gift does not use that gift as a service to God and for His glory, others are missing the benefit God intended them to bring to them.

### **Verse 8:**

In this verse Paul begins to point out some of the particular gifts that are given to the believer. Every child of God is given a gift, although not everyone has the same gift. Nine specific gifts are mentioned here. The gifts fall into three categories: first consisting of wisdom and knowledge; second of faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, and discerning of spirits; and third of tongues and interpretation.

In **verse 8** - he lists the first gift - "**wisdom**". "**Wisdom**" - is not intelligence, nor is it - "**knowledge**". "**Knowledge**" - in the pure physical sense is the accumulation of facts. "**Wisdom**" - is the ability to properly use those facts. It is a God-given ability to judge the true nature and value of spiritual things in their relation to one another; to have true spiritual insight and comprehension of the things of God.

In the Old Testament we see all kinds of manifestations of the Spirit of God. In - **I Kings 3:5-28** - we see the demonstration of the spiritual gift of - "**wisdom**" given to Solomon by God.

The kind of wisdom that God gives is totally different from natural wisdom or the wisdom of the world - cf. **I Corinthians 1:18-24**. The natural wisdom of man and the wisdom that comes only from God is contrasted by - **James 3:13-18**. The word - "**conversation**" in **verse 13** - means behavior. Any time there is in man - "**bitter envying and strife**", he certainly has no cause for glorying in his supposed wisdom for his very behavior, even his own heart so inclined to - "**bitter envying and strife**" would prove that he is lying about having wisdom.

### **Verse 9:**

There is but - "**one faith**" - **Ephesians 4:5**, which is a gift of God through the Holy Spirit - **Ephesians 2:8**; **Philippians 1:29**. This faith, which is a gift of God, is the means through which the believer comes to know Christ as his Saviour. This faith is common to all believers - **John 5:24, 17:3**; **I John 5:9-13**. Therefore, the faith Paul is discussing as a gift is not referring to saving faith, but he speaks of an extraordinary measure of faith being given to some of them. It was evidently such faith as described in - **I Corinthians 13:2**; **Matthew 17:19-20, 21:21**.

There are degrees, or greater and smaller measures of faith. The more of the Word of God the believer - "**hears**", receives, believes and accepts what God says in the Bible, the more his faith grows or increases. Take note of - **II Thessalonians 1:3**; **II Corinthians 10:15** and even the apostles prayed: "**Lord increase our faith**" - **Luke 17:5**.

With the above being true, we can then conclude that the opposite must also be true. The less the believer hears, receives, accepts, and believes God's Word, the less faith he has. The smaller his measure of faith, the greater his doubts and fears. The greater his doubts and fears, the less faithful to the Lord he becomes. The less faithful he becomes the more reasons he uses which are nothing but petty excuses for not serving God.

And though faith is a gift of God, as are all the graces bestowed upon the believer, the believer is responsible to diligently seek the continual increase of his faith. He must apply himself to the constant use of the God appointed means of faith's growth which is the belief and practice of God's Word.

The gift of healing was one of the sign-gifts - **Acts 4:29-30, 5:12-16**, cf. **II Corinthians 12:12**. These gifts were but temporary, designed to "confirm the word of God" until the New Testament was written. That this was the purpose of these gifts is evident from the fact that Paul could not heal himself - **II Corinthians 12:7-9**. He did not heal his co-workers. Surely, if this gift of the Holy Spirit was to be used on any and everybody as the modern day so-called "healers" would have us believe, Paul would have healed Timothy, his **"own son in the faith"** - **I Timothy 1:2**. But, instead of healing Timothy he told him to take some medicine - **"Drink no longer water (only), but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities"** - **I Timothy 5:23**. This was probably the best medical remedy known in that day for this type of illness. Paul did not heal Trophimus, but left him at Miletum sick - **II Timothy 4:20**. There is absolutely no evidence that Paul exercised his gift of healing in the case of Epaphroditus, who because of his burden for and unceasing labor in the work of God - **"was nigh unto death"** - **Philippians 2:25-30**.

Those who claim that God still gives these gifts unto men need to take a good look at - **James 5:14-15**. But, these verses, if **"rightly divided"** - **II Timothy 2:15** in the light of the rest of the New Testament, provides no comfort whatsoever to those who claim it as proof that this gift still exists.

### **Verse 10:**

**"Miracles"** - in the original is more literally "powers." While all nine of the gifts of the Spirit may in a sense be said to have been miraculous in their nature, the **"miracles"** - or powers here spoken of seem to indicate a greater manifestation of the power of God than the other gifts.

The working of miracles involved power over nature - **Acts 5:1-10; 13:11; Galatians 3:5; Hebrews 2:4**. These miracles were designed to authenticate divine spokesmen - **II Corinthians 12:12**.

**"To another prophecy"** - **"prophecy"** is not limited here to foretelling the future, but refers to the God-given ability to make known the will of God, as it was revealed directly to them from the Lord, before the New Testament was completed. Once the New Testament was completed the Lord ceased to bestow this gift upon men.

**"To another discerning of spirits"** - This was a very necessary gift for that period of time before the New Testament was completed. If a member of a church claimed to be a prophet, another member or members to whom God had given the supernatural ability to discern (the same verb is used in **11:29** and means to distinguish, to separate, discriminate) spirits would then advise the church as to whether the man spoke by the Holy Spirit, or by the spirits of demons - **14:29, I Timothy 4:1-2, II Peter 2:1, I John 4:1**.

Since the New Testament was completed the utterances of men concerning God have been judged by the Word of God. Even the spirit in which one proclaims God's Word may be judged provided the strictest adherence to God's Word be observed by those who are judging. No one has a right to say that another has proclaimed God's Word in a wrong or right spirit, unless it can be proven by the Word of God. Mere "feelings" about such a thing must not be allowed, for no one now has the supernatural gift of - **"discerning spirits."**

**"To another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues".** Since the subject of the gifts of speaking in tongues is dealt with at some length in **chapter 14**, we will wait until then to deal with the more minute details of the use of this gift. It is necessary here to point out only some of the main facts concerning this gift.

First of all, let it be noted that this gift of speaking in tongues was one of the sign-gifts - **14:22**, and is, therefore, declared to be but a temporary gift (as were the other sign-gifts) given only until the New Testament was completed - **13:8-10**.

Second, in distinct contrast to the importance placed upon this gift by those who claim to have it today, the Holy Spirit caused Paul to place it at the very bottom of the list every time it is mentioned in this chapter - **verses 10, 28, 30**. In **chapter 13** - he declares that the gift will cease. In **chapter 14** - the Holy Spirit moves the apostle to declare that in the church he had rather speak - **"five words"** that people could understand than to speak - **"ten thousand words"** in a tongue or language they could not understand - **V:19**.

Third, it is evident that whatever those who had the gift of tongues spoke was a language that could be understood, for it could be interpreted by those who had the gift of interpretation. Those who spoke in tongues at Pentecost spoke in the various languages of the many different people gathered at Jerusalem - **Acts 2:4-11**. Thus it was not mere gibberish or jargon that no one understood.

Fourth, speaking in tongues was not produced by an uncontrollable impulse resulting in hysterical outbursts such as is seen among those who now claim to have this gift. The Holy Spirit, through Paul, plainly commanded those at Corinth who had this gift to speak one at a time and not more than three in any one service. He also commands them to keep silent unless there was an interpreter present - **14:27-28**.

### **Verse 11:**

**"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will".** **"All these"** - refer to the nine supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit to the members of the first churches - **verses 8-10**. There is definite emphasis upon - **"all"**. Whatsoever those churches needed to worship and serve God acceptably was provided by the work of the Holy Spirit within the members of those churches. He worked sovereignly - **"as He will"**, for He is sovereign even as the Father and the Son are sovereign. His gifts could not be bought nor gotten by any means whatsoever. In His infinite wisdom He gave such gifts as He saw fit to such members as He pleased.

While the Holy Spirit, upon the completion of the New Testament ceased to bestow such extraordinary gifts as the nine listed here, He continues His effective work in the Lord's churches and shall continue His work in them so long as they are in this world.

All these gifts operate under the same Spirit and given to every man as a personal gift according to His will.

**I CORINTHIANS 12:1-11**

## Study Guide

1. In **chapter 12** they were confused and mixed up about the matter of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. **"Now concerning,"** was used to show that he was moving to a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ are more than natural abilities, talents, or skills, they come from \_\_\_\_\_ and are controlled by the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. **"Gifts"** - means, "\_\_\_\_\_."
5. The word - **"ignorant"** simply means a \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The verb **"carried away"** was used for a prisoner being \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The force behind those -**"dumb idols"** were the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.
8. No person - **"speaking"** under the influence of the "\_\_\_\_\_ " would speak a heretical doctrine about Jesus Christ.
9. Christians should know that the true source of spiritual gifts is \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The word **"gifts"** comes from the Greek word "charisma," which means: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ bestowed upon \_\_\_\_\_ believers by a \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Gifts are for service and are given to enable the \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ God in a certain capacity.
12. Why does God give His children talents?
13. Does God give all of His children a talent or talents? Explain your answer.
14. Will a child of God be able to brag about all he did in time when he get to heaven? Explain your answer.
15. No one member has all of the spiritual gifts - true or false. Explain
16. Why does a child of God need to use all of these talents with in the church?
17. **"Wisdom"** - is \_\_\_\_\_, nor is it \_\_\_\_\_.
18. Define knowledge and wisdom and what is the difference?
19. The kind of wisdom that God \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_?
20. **In verse 9**, the faith Paul is discussing as a gift \_\_\_\_\_ referring to \_\_\_\_\_, but he speaks of an \_\_\_\_\_ measure of faith being given to some of them

21. The less the believer hears, receives, accepts and believes God's Word, the less \_\_\_\_\_ he has. The \_\_\_\_\_ his measure of \_\_\_\_\_, the greater his \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
22. What does the following phrase mean - "The gift of healing was one of the sign-gifts?"
23. Miracles were designed to authenticate divine inspiration of God's Word and \_\_\_\_\_ when the New Testament was finished.
24. Prophecy refers to God given ability to make known the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
25. Explain the gift of "discerning of spirits".
26. Since the New Testament was completed the utterances of men concerning God have been judged by the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.
27. The gift of speaking in tongues was one of the \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ and is, therefore, declared to be but a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.
28. Those who had the gift of tongues spoke a \_\_\_\_\_ that could be \_\_\_\_\_. true or false? Explain your answer.
29. How did God provide the needs of His church to worship and serve Him?