



“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal,” I Corinthians 12:7.

Those Wonderful Spiritual Gifts

Lesson Aim: To increase usefulness to Christ by clarifying the place of spiritual gifts in the life of each believer.

L137. Date: April 1975. **Text:** I Corinthians 12:4-14, 27-30.

Topic: Holy Spirit: Gifts Of.

Oh, the tragedy of a church wracked with problems! Such was the church to which the Apostle Paul wrote I and II Corinthians. The first epistle to Corinth deals almost wholly with the consecutive treatment of problems.

Any church which is carnal will have problems. I Corinthians, chapters 1- 11, deal with her carnalities. She was weak because of divisions in fellowship, derelictions from duty and morality, and difficulties in her work and witness. Carnalities can be overcome only by spiritualities. It was almost with a sigh of relief that Paul wrote, “Now concerning spiritualities . . .” 12:1. For their divisions, he recommended the unifying gifts of the Spirit. For their derelictions, he recommended the motivating law of love. For their difficulties, he recommended obedience to Spirit-given leaders. The double tragedy in the church at Corinth was that she had made a carnal approach to spiritual things and was suffering the consequences.

I Corinthians, chapters 12-14, form a unit in the epistle upon the subject of spiritual gifts. Chapter 12 sets forth the nature of spiritual gifts. Chapter 13 deals with the motive in using spiritual gifts. Chapter 14 considers the relative value of spiritual gifts. That unit will be surveyed in the next three lessons [L138-L140].

The aim of today's study is to increase your usefulness to Christ by clarifying the place of spiritual gifts in your life and service,

I. DEFINITION

What is a spiritual gift? A spiritual gift is a special endowment given by the Holy Spirit which enables the believer to render effective service in the Kingdom of God. The Greek term Paul used, which is translated “spiritual gifts” in English, is charisma. It is based upon the word, “charis,” which means “grace,” and indicates that a spiritual gift is a grace gift. A spiritual gift, therefore, is more than a natural talent. It is a special capacity for service given by the Holy Spirit to the individual Christian.

A person may have a natural talent to sing. That natural talent may enable him to sing with excellence. If he has a spiritual gift of ministry through song, the music will communicate a message far beyond that of musical excellence. Because a person sings a religious song in church before the preacher speaks does not mean that he is using a spiritual gift. There is a world of difference between one's singing with a natural talent and with a spiritual gift.

A spiritual gift is bestowed totally apart from merit; it is by grace. It is not acquired; it is freely bestowed. A spiritual gift is not received as a result of one's being filled with the Spirit. It is the result of his being saved. The moment one trusts Jesus, the Holy Spirit begins to live in him. He brings the spiritual gift with which He endows the believer.

A spiritual gift is a divine enabling by which the power of the Holy Spirit is evidently and particularly upon the spiritual service of a believer. Each believer has differing gifts according to the grace God has given (Romans 12:6).

II. DIVERSITY

There is great diversity (difference, distinction, separation) among the spiritual gifts. As a physical body has many members (hands, feet, ears, lungs, legs) and each member has its own function (seeing, hearing, chewing, breathing), so the body of Christ has many members with many functions. A spiritual gift enables a member of Christ's body to function in a certain capacity. It would be most strange, therefore, if Christians did not have differing abilities and ministries assigned by the Holy Spirit.

Diversity is seen in the work of the Holy Trinity (verses 4-6). (1) There is one Spirit who creates the capacity to render spiritual service (verse 4). (2) There is one Lord who directs the use of a spiritual gift in service (verse 5). (3) There is one Father who empowers the exercise of a spiritual gift and makes it effective (verse 6). Since the work of the Holy Trinity is different in bestowing, administering, and empowering spiritual gifts, why think it

strange that believers are different in the exercise of spiritual gifts?

Diversity is seen in the many abilities conferred (verses 8-10). A list of spiritual gifts will be presented later. Suffice it to observe at this point that some gifts involve heightened mental processes (wisdom, knowledge); some are apart from mental processes (faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits), and some are in a sphere above mental processes (kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues). Do not feel proud or inferior regarding your gift. The Holy Spirit confers gifts as He wills (verse 11).

Diversity is seen in the analogy of a physical body (verses 12-27). As man needs many members in his physical body, each member exercising a different function in behalf of the whole body, so Christ needs many members in His spiritual body. One does not need to be as every other Christian in order to function effectively as a member of the body of Christ.

Diversity is seen in the varied offices set in the church (verses 28-30). (1) The church needs men to fill the teaching offices (apostles, prophets, teachers), the miraculous offices (miracles, gifts of healings), and the administrative offices (helps, governments), as well as the office of missionary evangelism to foreigners (tongues). God gave men with gifts to the church to fill each of those offices. By a fit division of labor the efficiency of all the bodily functions are duly discharged.

As a Christian, you are “in Christ.” As a member of Christ, you have a ministry to perform. To enable you to perform that ministry, the Holy Spirit has given you some special area where your efforts will witness His power; you will be effective. Since no spiritual gift is to be exercised alone (as sight or hearing are not to be apart from the physical body), He put you in the church—the body of Christ upon earth—where your gift will be joined cooperatively with other gifts and the work of God will be done.

III. UNIVERSALITY

“... **The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal,**” verse 7. What did Paul mean? He declared that every believer has received a spiritual gift. He informed you that you have a spiritual gift. There is no believer whom the Holy Spirit has neglected to enable to serve.

Why has the Spirit given His gifts to each? Paul answered, “... to profit withal.” That is to say, “That all may profit from the exercise of the gift of each.” One’s spiritual gift was not given merely to profit him. It was given that all his fellows might be profited by it. The idea that a “gift of tongues” is for personal edification only is foreign to the teachings of the New Testament.

In a physical body, the eye has the gift of sight. It sees, but it does not see merely for its own sake. It sees for the whole body. In speaking of it, one does not say, "My eye sees . . ." He says, "I see . . ." It is the eye which sees, but it is so intimately related to the body that the whole person sees through the eye.

Consider that term "diversity," verse 4. It means "separation." It means more than that. It means "the separation of parts which properly belong together." Only when spiritual gifts are united in the body of the church are they most effective in ministry and powerful in work.

God has given you a spiritual gift. He gave it with the intention that you use it to His glory through the church. If your understanding or exercise of your spiritual gift separates you from the local congregation of Christians, there is something seriously wrong. Use your spiritual gift in relation to the work and witness of the church.

IV. ENUMERATION

How many spiritual gifts are there? What are they? Four times in the letters of Paul he listed the gifts of the Spirit: Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Ephesians 4:11. Some consider Romans 12:6-8 to be the list of gifts and I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30 to be "manifestations" of the gifts when they are exercised. There are problems with that position. This study considers each list as expressions of gifts of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 12:6-8 seven gifts are named: prophesying, ministering, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, showing mercy. In I Corinthians 12:8,10 nine gifts are named; word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healings, working miracles, prophecy, discerning spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongue. In I Corinthians 12:28-30 nine office gifts are named: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps, governments, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. In Ephesians 4:11 four (or five) office gifts are named as follows: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. (Some consider pastor-teachers as one office; others consider them two offices.) There are thirty gifts mentioned in the four lists. Eleven of them are duplicates. That leaves nineteen different spiritual gifts by which believers are enabled to serve God.

Where are you in the list? Which area has the Holy Spirit designated as your special place of service? Not everyone will be an apostle any more than everyone will have a gift of miracles, but every believer has some gift. You have a gift. The key to effective Christian service is to find and use your spiritual gift.

V. UNITY

As different as they are, there is a blessed unity among the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are designed to minister in unity. Only the abuse of a spiritual gift would keep it from promoting the harmony of the body.

There is unity in spiritual gifts because of the nature of the Giver: “. . . **That one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will,**” verse 11. Because they are assigned by one Spirit and tempered together by one God, unity is the natural result. The one human spirit indwelling your physical body causes your members to work in harmony. The one Holy Spirit indwelling the spiritual body creates like harmony.

There is unity in spiritual gifts because of the nature of their union (verses 12, 14). Spiritual gifts are put into “body” of Christ. Each who is a member of His body is vitally joined to every other member. Relationship to one another and to Christ, as His body, creates unity among believers with various spiritual gifts. There is unity in spiritual gifts because of the nature of needs (verse 14-27). The body needs many functions. It needs powers of sight, hearing, thought, and locomotion. To have only one such power would be to suffer severe limitations. The needs of the body are supplied by each member of the body, fulfilling its assigned function. Needs will not be met in the body of Christ unless you and every other believer assume the duty inherent in your spiritual gift. If you and I so minister so as to supply mutually the other's need, there will be harmony between us as God intended.

VI. LIMITATION

Please be aware of certain limitations which God has set upon spiritual gifts. I Corinthians 12:28-30 lists the spiritual gifts in the order of importance. Accept the fact that the gifts do differ in importance. It is possible that your gift is not one of the primary ones. Do not let it be a matter of concern. The Holy Spirit conferred each gift, “. . . **dividing to every man severally as he will,**” verse 11.

It is natural for one to emphasize the gift he has received. Do not think that God has gifted you only or that your gift only is important. Neither expect all to have your gift or require others to manifest your gift in order to be considered “spiritual” Christians.

Do not expect to possess every gift. You have at least one spiritual gift, perhaps more, but you do not have them all. You need the ministry of

believers with gifts other than the one you have received.

Do not expect to see every gift manifested in your church or generation. The Holy Spirit gives as He wills. He gives those gifts which are needed in a particular time and place. He is under no obligation to manifest Himself in a particular way at a particular time. Gifts may appear in one time and place, but not in another. God knows what He is doing. Be content.

Do not demand of the Spirit any particular gift. That is a tragic mistake of the charismatic movement. God has not promised tongues, nor miracles, nor any other spiritual gift as a sign of superior spiritual life nor special spiritual blessing. Be content to accept what the Spirit assigns, and use it to God's glory and man's good. That is enough.

Learn these lessons from I Corinthians 12. (1) The Holy Spirit actually qualifies believers for service by endowing each of them with a spiritual gift (verses 4, 8-11). (2) The Holy Spirit is absolutely sovereign in bestowing His gifts (verse 11). (3) Every believer has some spiritual gift (verses 7, 11, 27). (4) No person has every gift (verses 28-30). (5) All believers do not have the same gifts (verses 8-10, 28-30). (6) Each gift is important, is needed, and is not to be neglected, since it is given for the purpose of serving others (verses 7, 15-25). (7) Some gifts are more important than others (verse 28). (8) There is a difference in a spiritual gift and a natural talent. A spiritual gift is conferred directly by the Holy Spirit (verse 4). (9) Some gifts relate to the enabling of the individual (verse 8), whereas other gifts relate to offices in the church (verse 28). (10) No church should expect to have every gift since they are given according to need (verse 28). (11) Gifts are not the same in every generation (verse 11). (12) Spiritual gifts are no indication of spiritual living (1:7; 3:1-3). (13) One's gift is to be used in the church (Ephesians 4:11-12), with a sense of stewardship (I Peter 4:10), in the power of God (Romans 12:6-8), but never for personal gratification (12:7; 14:12).

Each believer has some gift. No believer has all gifts. Determine your gift, and use it to the glory of God.

Questions

1. What is a spiritual gift?
2. Why are there many spiritual gifts?
3. What are some of the spiritual gifts?
4. How do you know each Christian has a spiritual gift?
5. What spiritual gifts do you recognize in operation today?
6. When and how does one receive a spiritual gift?
7. What is your spiritual gift?

8. How can you discover and use your spiritual gift?
9. What truth in I Corinthians 12 means the most to you? Why?
10. How can you profitably put the truths of the lesson into effect in your life?