

I Corinthians 12 – Spiritual Gifts in the Church

1. Diversity of Spiritual Gifts, v. 1-11

- a. Paul dealt with questions concerning spiritual gifts in Ch. 12-14. Apparently, they were esteeming gifts as better than others. Goal is unity of the body (John 17); this is threatened by factions in the church (1:10)
- b. Primary audience – Gentiles, v. 2
- c. “Holy Spirit” denotes “to speak and to act according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit” v. 3, 9, 13
- d. Diversity – variety, v. 4
- e. The source of spiritual gifts is the Holy Spirit, v. 4-6. Note the Godhead’s involvement
- f. What are the purposes? V. 5-7
 - i. Render acceptable service to the Lord, v. 5
 - ii. To be co-workers with the Lord, v. 6
 - iii. To edify the church, v. 7
- g. According to His will, the Spirit determined who would receive what gift, v. 11
- h. Some in Corinth may have had more than one gift. The apostles probably possessed all gifts (Lk. 24:49, Ac. 1:8, II Cor. 12:12). Probable rule was one per person, see this chapter.
- i. What are the gifts? How are they defined? 8-10
 - i. “Word of wisdom” – ability to reveal divine truth, 2:6, II Pet. 3:15
 - ii. “Word of knowledge” – ability of a teacher to reveal God’s will in order to edify the church
 - iii. “Faith by the same spirit” – may refer to the source of one’s faith, the Holy Spirit, or God
 - iv. “Gifts of healing” – acts of mercy, Ac. 5:16
 - v. “Working of miracles or powers” – refers to acts of divine judgment, Ac. 5:1-11, 13:4-12
 - vi. “Prophecy” – the ability to present a lesson by divine utterance
 - vii. “Discerning spirits” – ability to discriminate whether a prophet is true or not
 - viii. “Various kinds of tongues” – ability to speak in foreign languages, Ac. 2:4-11
 - ix. “Interpretation of tongues” – ability to translate foreign languages
 - x. See also Rom. 12:4-8, Eph. 4:7-15

2. Unity in Diversity, v. 13-31

- a. Point – through an analogy of the human body, Paul illustrates the importance of each member of the church
- b. “All made to drink of one spirit” – indwelling of the Holy Spirit, v. 13
- c. Note: person is baptized into the body, v. 13, Eph. 1:22-23
- d. 5 Lessons stressed, v. 14-27
 - i. Each member should be content with his spiritual gift, v. 15-16
 - ii. Each member fulfills a useful function in the body, v. 17-19
 - iii. Members are mutually dependent on one another, v. 20-24
 - iv. Members should sympathize with one another, v. 25-26
 - v. There should be no discord among the members, v. 25

- e. 1st, 2nd, 3rd refers to matters of importance, v. 23. Not the list order: apostles are first because they possessed all the gifts. Notices the gift of tongues is last.
 - f. Helps and governments, v. 28
 - i. Helps – may refer to those who came to the aid of the poor; also, may refer to deacons, Ac. 6
 - ii. Governments, administrations – may refer to elders. Literally: the work of a captain as he navigates the boat safely through the rocks to the harbor.
 - g. More excellent way is love, v. 31, 13
3. Conclusion: Who is the Holy Spirit?
- a. Part of the Godhead, v. 4-6
 - b. Inspired men to write the Bible, v. 6-16
 - c. Dwells within the Christian today, v. 19-20
 - d. Gave spiritual, miraculous gifts to Christians in the early church, chapter 12
 - e. Given directly by God (Ac. 2, 10) or by the laying on of an apostle's hands (Ac. 6, 19)
 - f. Received today through baptism, Mt. 28:18-20
 - g. Leads Christians through the Bible, Rom. 8:14-18
 - h. Intercedes for Christians, Rom. 8:26-27

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