

## 1 Corinthians 12:1; 4 to 11 ; 1 Corinthians 12:12 -- 20, 27 -- 31 Barrowby and Gt Gonerby Series -- October 2012

We know from what we have already covered in this letter of Paul to the Corinthian Christians, that he had to deal with issues where they weren't doing too well -- the problem of divisions amongst them; the problem of immorality.

We've also seen that Paul has also given answers to questions which the Corinthians had sent to him -- about marriage for example. (And haircuts)

Another issue which they wanted to learn more about was spiritual gifts, and so in this chapter and also in chapters 13 and 14, Paul goes into detail about a subject which we will see, is still very relevant to God's people nowadays.

So what do we mean by spiritual gifts?

These are abilities or skills which God grants to Christians through the Holy Spirit.

They are all then, supernatural in origin, -- but some are more obviously supernatural than others.

There are three lists in the new Testament which describe the spiritual gifts, (in Paul's letters to the Christians at Ephesus and at Rome, and here in the Corinthian letter). The lists overlap. They describe 20 gifts in all. Some are what we can call enhanced natural abilities (the gift of teaching, or administration, or hospitality), the more obviously supernatural ones are the gift of miracles, healing, prophecy, or that strange one -- "speaking in tongues".

These gifts were being displayed in the congregation of believers at Corinth. But as well as being a blessing they had the potential for causing problems.

The Corinthians were using their spiritual gifts selfishly not to prosper the church but to promote themselves.

They were claiming that they were "better" Christians than others because they had these gifts.

So Paul has to spell out some ground rules.

First -- The gifts are given for the good of the whole church. They are not for individuals to enjoy selfishly, or show off .

Second -- All the different gifts are given as gifts by God. They are not rewards for being a good Christian, or just for the super spiritual. They cannot be earned at all - just like any gift they are gifts. (Literally birthday gift).

Third -- Different gifts are given different people - not everyone has the same gift

Fourth -- They are given to be used - to serve each other - if someone has a gift and is not using it, then the Church suffers.

So, in verse 7,

-- "the Spirit has given each of us a special way of serving others" CEV

-- "now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" NIV

And in verse 12 onwards Paul uses this image of the body , as a picture of how all the spiritual gifts work together.

Just as our ears and eyes and feet and hands -- all different parts yet all work together as part of our body.

So, he says, it is with the body of Christ -- his people. Different gifts working together.

Let's look at some of the gifts mentioned in this passage.

We leave out tongues and interpretation of tongues -- as we cover that in detail in chapter 14.

**The gift of faith (9).** This is going beyond the faith by which we first put our trust in Jesus.

It's the faith to take on great things for God. "Attempt things so great that unless God is in them they will fail"

**Healing and Miracles (9,10).**

These next two gifts, belong together and were particularly applicable to the ministry of Paul and the other apostles ([Acts 19:11, 12](#); [28:7-9](#); [2Cor 12:12](#)). But the Ministry of healing did not die out with the apostles. It is recorded as being part of church practice all through church history and should be present -- is present, in many Christian communities nowadays. This gift has been rediscovered in the Western Church -- particularly since the Holy Spirit revival of the 1970s

**Prophecy (10)**

This can mean two things. The first is the more obvious meaning of someone receiving a message direct from God, to guide or warn the church. (More in Chapter 14)

Prophecy can also mean simply bringing God's word to people as in the sense of explaining this book God's word -- i.e. preaching.

### **The Gift of Knowledge (8)**

This goes alongside Prophecy.

A good example -Peter with Annanias and Sapphira. (Explain -- they claimed they had given all the proceeds from the sale of some property to the church, when they had kept back a large part for themselves. Peter was given the knowledge of their deceit and challenge them)

Such a gift is good for the Church. It certainly prevents hypocrisy! It promotes integrity and transparency. We read after the Annanias and Sapphira incident that “great fear came upon the whole Church and upon all who heard of these things, many signs and wonders were done among the people by the apostles and more than ever believers were added to the Lord.”

### **The Gift of Wisdom (8)**

Knowing what is right and wrong, what God would decide. What Jesus would do. Discernment

There are examples of people being given wisdom in a special way - for example King Solomon. A valuable gift.

### **The Gift of Discernment of Spirits (10)**

Linked to wisdom but slightly different. This is the ability to recognise from what source any purported spiritual word or experience comes.

The Bible seems to identify three main sources The Holy Spirit, the human spirit, and evil spirits.(expand)

Example of the use of this gift - St Paul at Philippi - the slave girl who was pestering him with the cry “these men are servants of the most high God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation”. Even though true words Paul saw clearly the operation of an evil spirit.

### **Conclusion**

Paul closes this chapter with the words, “Earnestly desire the gifts”.

They are given to the Christian community because used properly they help to make us a special community.

And I suppose the question to each of us is -- what spiritual gift has God given to me, for the church in here?

What gift has God-given to me? .

We should pray that God will show us our gift -- because if we are not using it than the church here is the poorer