

‘Spiritual gifts’

I Cor. 12:1-11

- a. The usefulness and limitations of the word ‘gift’ to describe the empowering of the Spirit for ministry/service.
- b. **The manifestation of the Spirit in the church through each member for the common good. There are separate representative lists of spiritual gifts:** 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 28, 29-30; 13:1-3, 8; 14:6, 26; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-12; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.

Context/background.

1. The Corinthians downplayed the material/physical side of **Christian existence or life, only ‘spiritual’ experiences really mattered.** They also had an **over-realised eschatology. That is, they wrongly believed that the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit confirmed that the new life Christians had entered had fully arrived.**
2. ‘But Paul had a different view of **life in the Spirit.** For him it did not so much remove one from the present existence as enable one to live in the present simultaneously in weakness and power (see, e.g. 2:1-5; 4:9-13). Life in the present is conditioned by the life of the future that has already **begun** with Christ’s death and resurrection (cf. 4:1-5; 7:29-31); **but that life has only begun, it is not yet consummated.** Thus, in the present they must cultivate loving, responsible relationships in the body of Christ; and their times of public worship must be for mutual edification, not for heightened individualistic spirituality, which in this case had become a false spirituality.’ (Fee. 1 Cor. p. 573).

Summary:

1. **Paul emphasises to the Corinthians that the diversity of the one Spirit’s work reflects the diversity and oneness of the Triune God.**
2. **The Church, in the exercise of ‘spiritual gifts’,** should reveal the character of the God who manifests Himself in and through them – the three distinct diverse Persons who form a perfect inseparable unit (Vv. 4-6). If these ‘gifts’ are being exercised properly they will support a diverse yet united community in love and concern for one another. Paul describes the exercise of these gifts as being **‘for the common good’** and to be an outworking of love (1 Cor. 13).
3. The gifts, as a manifestation of the Spirit at work, are inseparably linked to the giver, the Holy Spirit (v. 7), they are the **‘gifts of the Spirit’.**
4. **The Spirit distributes His gifts/workings** as He determines (v. 11).

Text. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

V.1 Now about ‘spiritual things’ (masc.) or ‘spiritual things/gifts’ (neut.) (pneumatikos). The working/gifting of the Spirit to confirm ‘Jesus is Lord’.

Vs. 4 ‘spiritual gifts’ = grace (χαρις), act of giving -gifts (μα) plural (τα).

The meaning of ‘spiritual gifts’ (charismata) and the flow of Paul’s argument (see Fee, 1 Cor. p. 584-585 for the outline below).

- V.4 DIVERSITIES of **gifts** there are, but the **same Spirit**
 V. 5 DIVERSITIES of **service** there are, but the **same Lord**
 V. 6 DIVERSITIES of **workings** there are, but the **same God**
 who works **ALLTHINGS IN ALL PEOPLE** [note trinitarian focus]
 V. 7 TO EACH is given the manifestation of/in the Spirit
for the common good For
 V.8 TO ONE is given a message/**word of wisdom**, through **the Spirit**
 TO ANOTHER a message/**word of knowledge**, by the **same Spirit**
 V.9 TO ANOTHER **faith**, by the **same Spirit**
 TO ANOTHER **gifts of healing**, by the **one Spirit**
 V.10 TO ANOTHER **works of miracles**;
 TO ANOTHER **prophecy**;
 TO ANOTHER **discernment of spirits**;
 TO ANOTHER **kinds of tongues**;
 TO ANOTHER **interpretation of tongues**;
 V.11 **ALL THESE THINGS are the work of the one and same Spirit,**
GIVING to EACH ONE, even as He wills.

Paul emphasises that 'to each one [every member] the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good' (v. 7, 11), and these are 'given...' as he wills' (v.11). So, **the Spirit manifests His presence through every member for the good of the whole church and community.**

Reflection/Response.

1. A first question for us to ask as a community and personally is, what ministries/services does the Spirit want to work in our community?
2. Then we can ask, how can I make myself available so the Spirit can work in and through me to exercise these ministries/services?
3. Then we can ask, how do we discern how the Spirit is working/wants to work in us and through us personally = our 'spiritual gifts'?
4. Finally, we can ask, how do outreach ministries/services ('gifts') bless the wider community as well as building up the Church?

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