

Our Spiritual Journey: The Gifts of the Spirit

Scripture Reference: I Corinthians 12:1-31

So far, we have been able to show Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts in nice little presentations to the church in Rome and the church in Ephesus. Paul was able to make his point with only a few statements (8 verses in Romans 12 and 16 verses in Ephesians 4). However, the church in Corinth was a different matter. This church was more problematic. So, there was a need to untangle the simple truth from a variety of weaknesses and errors that prevailed among them. Here is a list of some of the things that Paul had to deal with in the Corinthian church:

- Doctrinal division, argumentativeness, pride, and a partisan spirit – I Corinthians 1:10-31; 2:1-5; 3:1-9; 8:1
- Carnal / fleshly / unspiritual attitudes and actions that demonstrated immaturity – a level of spirituality described as *"babes / infants in Christ"* – I Corinthians 3:1-3
- Tolerance of sexual sin among the members of the church – I Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:9-20
- Suing one another in civil courts – I Corinthians 6:1-8
- Marriage problems and divorce – I Corinthians 7:1-40
- Entanglement with the idolatry of the ungodly culture around them – I Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:14-22
- Bad stewardship with money / poor support of the ministry – I Corinthians 9:1-14
- Poor consideration of and outreach to those that are unbelievers – I Corinthians 9:15-27; 10:23-33
- Carelessness and lack of desire to please God and to separate from selfishness and worldliness – I Corinthians 10:1-33
- Poor handling of God's design for the roles of men and women in the church – I Corinthians 11:1-16; 14:34-35
- Drunkenness and selfish indulgence at the Lord's table (communion) – I Corinthians 11:17-34
- Proud competitiveness and divisions concerning the ministry of the spiritual gifts – I Corinthians 12:1 – 14:40
- Confusion and ignorance about the resurrection – I Corinthians 15:1-58

It is to be noted that, by the time Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, we can observe that the church responded well to Paul's first letter and showed improvement. We must never become cavalier / disdainful of the Corinthian church. Note Paul's opening words in his first letter (I Corinthians 1:1-9). Unpleasant as the situation was there, God used it to give us a vast amount of instruction to help future generations, who would doubtless face the same kind of problems in their churches. Where would we be without Paul's letters to the Corinthians?

Nevertheless, as we consider the controversial side of spiritual gifts, we must keep in mind that most of our source material in Scripture is brought to us through Paul's dealings with a church that was imbedded with carnality and immaturity. This study will not allow an in-depth exposition of I Corinthians 12:1 – 14:40. But we will attempt to give as much detail as possible, so that we can provide checks and balances to our understanding of spiritual gifts. Let's get started with a brief outline:

Spiritual gifts have a unified source: the triune God. – I Corinthians 12:1-13

Spiritual gifts are diversified. No one has them all. All gifts are needed. Therefore, everyone in the body of Christ is needed. – I Corinthians 12:14-31

Spiritual gifts must be used in an environment of love. Love is superior and of lasting value compared to all spiritual gifts. – I Corinthians 13:1-13

Spiritual gifts are focused on a unified purpose: Edification. – I Corinthians 14:1-25

Spiritual gifts are to be used decently and in order – not in an environment of chaos and confusion. – I Corinthians 14:26-40