



## The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

### A Study of 1 Corinthians 12–14

**1 Corinthians 12:1** “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.”

Let us be intelligent about these gifts of the Holy Spirit,” Paul says. Paul then proceeds to teach us about the true gifts of the Spirit. Before looking at what Paul says, let us find out who he is talking to. It sometimes helps us in understanding a passage of the Bible to know who the prophet is writing to.

**1 Corinthians 12:27** “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

Paul is talking to the body of Christ. What is the body of Christ?

**Ephesians 1:22-23** “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

**Colossians 1:24** “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:”

So, Paul is talking to people who are members of Christ’s body, the church. In fact, he is even more specific, he says he is talking to baptized members of the church. He furthermore makes the point that there is only one true body of Christ—only one true church.

**1 Corinthians 12:12-13** “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

So, Paul is talking to baptized church members of the true church in Corinth, and he tells them, “Don’t be ignorant about spiritual gifts. I am going to tell you some things about spiritual gifts so you won’t be ignorant about them.” Now here is what Paul told those church members about spiritual gifts. First, he said, there are different gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are not all the same.

**1 Corinthians 12:4** “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.”

Next, Paul says, these gifts are given to you to make you a blessing to the church and to others. Each of you, Paul says, speaking to the baptized members of the church, has some gift of the Holy Spirit.

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

Paul then enumerates some of the different gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given to the church.

**1 Corinthians 12:8-10** *“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.”*

When God’s true church has become unified and has put away its sins, as happened at Pentecost, then each member of the church becomes endowed with a special gift of the Holy Spirit when he is baptized.

**Acts 2:38** *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”*

Now, Paul says to the Corinthians in chapter 12, these are gifts of the Holy Spirit that God gave to each of you when you were baptized. Remember, these are gifts, and when you receive a gift you don’t decide what that gift is, but the one who gives the gift decides what the gift is. Otherwise, it is not a gift. The Holy Spirit gives you the gift and He, not you, decides what particular gift you get.

**1 Corinthians 12:11** *“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”*

Now, Paul says, just because the Holy Spirit has given different gifts to different members of the church, don’t suppose that your gift is better than some other person’s gift. No, Paul says, it is the same Holy Spirit that gives each gift. Different church members are given different gifts so as to make a complete and well-balanced church, and each gift is needed.

**1 Corinthians 12:12-14** *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”*

Just imagine, Paul says, what your physical body would be like if every part were just the same.

**1 Corinthians 12:15-17** *“If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?”*

Just imagine a whole drawer full of eyeballs! What a grotesque sight that would be. That would not make a body, would it? The eyeballs need the face, hands, feet and all the rest of the body. No, Christ’s body is whole and complete and symmetrical. Anyone who wants everybody to be one thing has the body mixed up. Paul says, we don’t all receive the same gift or any other particular gift, but we all receive different gifts.

Now here is another point Paul makes: Where are the members placed who have received these gifts, and who puts them there?

*1 Corinthians 12:18* “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”

Each one who receives a gift of the Holy Spirit is placed within the body, or the church. In fact, as we have already noticed, it is when or after they are baptized into the church that a person receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Next, as we go down through this chapter of *1 Corinthians 12*, we find that Paul repeats himself to make sure that no one misunderstands him; everyone receives different gifts and abilities.

*1 Corinthians 12:19-21* “And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.”

Paul says, you may think some members are less important than you because their gift doesn't seem as good as yours, but every gift is needed. There may be someone who is a good teacher, while someone else is good at helping other people (notice, this is one of the gifts), but she may not be able to teach very well at all. Paul says they are both needed. In fact, Paul says that the more humble gifts should be given more honor.

*1 Corinthians 12:22-24* “Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:”

All members of the church should work together in harmony and love, preferring others above themselves.

*1 Corinthians 12:25-27* “That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

We should honor one another, giving more honor to those with lesser gifts, BUT God HAS set some gifts in the church as special. There are three particular gifts in the church that God has put special priority on, not that the people are more important, but these particular gifts are extra special.

*1 Corinthians 12:28-31* “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.”

Notice again that Paul says these are placed “in the church.”

In the next chapter, Paul goes on to say that the greatest thing we can have, even above the other gifts of the Holy Spirit is **LOVE**. After dwelling upon love in *1 Corinthians 13*, Paul now goes

on to say here in chapter 14, verse 1, that we should follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but most of all “*that you may prophecy.*”

**1 Corinthians 14:1** “*Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*”

### **The Gifts of the Holy Spirit Today**

Now let me ask you, is the church still supposed to have these gifts of the Holy Spirit? Let us look:

**Ephesians 4:8, 11** “*Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men...And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*”

Here it mentions the primary gifts that are given for the ministry of the church—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. How long were these gifts to remain in the church?

**Ephesians 4:11-13** “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*”

These gifts are to be in the church “*till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*” According to **1 Corinthians 13:9,10** and **Revelation 14:5**, that will not happen until Jesus comes. These gifts were permanent gifts Jesus gave to His church. They were always to remain with the believers until Jesus’ second coming. (**1 Cor 3:9-10** “*For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*” / **Rev 14:5** “*And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.*”)

**John 14:16** “*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*”

Why were these particular gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) given to the church, and why were they to remain with the church until Jesus’ second coming?

**Ephesians 4:14** “*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*”

If there was ever a time when we needed these gifts in the church, it is today when every wind of doctrine is blowing, by the trickery of men and with cunning craftiness.

**Matthew 24:24** “*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*”

If ever we needed these gifts that were promised to the church to keep it from being “*tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men,*” (**Eph. 4:14**) surely it is today. Thank the Lord that these gifts are promised for today.

## Summary

Let us summarize what Paul has told us in these chapters:

1. When God's church has been unified and purified as the church at Pentecost was, God will give everyone who repents and is baptized into it, thereby becoming a member of Christ's body, a gift of the Holy Spirit.
2. Everyone's gift is different.
3. Moreover, it is not for us to decide what gift we get, but the Holy Spirit decides.
4. Each person in the church is supposed to work harmoniously together, each complementing the other, to make a perfectly balanced and unified church body.
5. Yet, the most important thing we can have is love. Without love, nothing else matters.
6. We should pay particular attention to the gift of prophecy.