

1 Corinthians

Chapter 12, 13, 14 Introduction

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- **1 Corinthians Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Ungodly divisions result from man's wisdom.
- Chapter 2 Carnal man cannot understand our Spiritual God.
- Chapter 3 All Christians will have their labors tried by fire.
- Chapter 4 Boasting in our leaders puffs up and destroys fellowship.
- Chapter 5 Maintain the purity of the Church.
- Chapter 6 Do not dispute before the world and do not partake in sexual immorality.
- Chapter 7 Principles of marriage
- Chapter 8 The responsibility of liberty
- Chapter 9 Those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel
- Chapter 10 You cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons.
- Chapter 11 Propriety in corporate worship and communion
- Chapter 12 The body of Christ is unified around a diversity of spiritual gifts

- **Introduction & Review**

The next three chapters for us to study deal with a common topic of spiritual gifts. Before we examine these chapters in detail, it is important that we are equipped with the principles that are foundational to understanding the gifts. Obviously, this topic was a stumbling block for the Corinthians. After completing his discussion of communion, Paul moves on to this topic of division which apparently was just another manifestation of their immaturity. Unfortunately, in many ways, the same divisions exist today. Our purpose for studying this topic is not so that we can more clearly define our boundary of fellowship but rather because it is imperative that we are equipped with the entire counsel of God.

- **Spiritual gifts are not a measure of spirituality**

- **1 Cor. 1:4-7**

- Note that Paul says the Church at Corinth lacked no spiritual gift. All of the gifts that were extant at that time were manifest in the church.

- **1 Cor. 3: 1-4**

- Despite the fact that the Corinthians were blessed with every spiritual gift, Paul says that he could not address them as spiritual people but rather as worldly and babes in Christ. Clearly this is a chastisement from Paul that the Church was not where it should have been spiritually. But it is important to know that just because someone has a spiritual gift, they are not necessarily spiritual.

- This truth creates a difficult obstacle for those who would claim that there is some additional experience that will bring spirituality to the Christian walk.

- **Spiritual gifts are distributed according to God's will.**

- **Hebrews 2:1-4**

- As we remember that the gifts of the Spirit are different from the fruits of the Spirit, we find an important difference: every believer should manifest the fruits of the Spirit but God distributes the gifts of the Spirit according to His good purposes. Therefore, we cannot covet or disparage others' gifts nor should we gather our churches around those who possess certain gifts.

- **The most central doctrine at issue when considering the existence of all of the spiritual gifts is the sufficiency of Scripture.**

- A fundamental issue in the debate of spiritual gifts is whether all of the gifts mentioned in Romans 12, 1 Cor. 12, 13, 14 and Ephesians are in existence and functioning today. When we consider this question, we must realize that the debate isn't over whether there are still *powerful* gifts or *less powerful* gifts. Nor is it over *spiritual* versus *super spiritual* gifts. The primary issue to consider when attempting to answer the question about the existence of all the gifts centers on the sufficiency of Scripture. Is Scripture complete?

- The reason this is at the heart of consideration is that the spiritual gifts can be divided up into two primary groups, the

administrative gifts and the revelatory gifts. That is, those gifts that reveal to us the mind and will of God and those which administer the mind and will of God to the body.

- The revelatory gifts can be divided into two groups again. The first group which are those gifts which directly proclaim or reveal the very words of God would include prophecy, tongues plus the interpretation of tongues. The other group within the revelatory gifts would be signs, wonders, miracles and healing. Although these gifts are not directly revelatory, they were very closely associated with the revelatory gifts.
- If you had attended the church at Corinth or the churches in Galatia or Ephesus, they would have been very "charismatic." This was because as the church was just beginning, God gave these gifts so that the church was able to function until the complete canon could be distributed. Once the scriptures were complete, (which would have been after the age of the Apostles) there was no need for further direct revelation.
- **Miraculous gifts were used to testify to the authority of someone and their message.**
- When a believer opens the Word of God and uses it to lay out the Gospel for someone, their authority to do so has already been established. If the question were asked, "On what authority do you say these things?" the person could simply say based on the authority of the Apostles and prophets. But it is not necessary that we have the authority of the Apostles vested in us because if their authority has already been testified to, then their message has already been established as true and accurate. The only reason I would need to establish my authority would be if I were attempting to bring new or contrary revelation to that which has already been established as genuine.
- **2 Cor. 12:12**
- Paul states here that we know who an Apostle is by the miraculous gifts which testify to his authenticity. An Apostle is someone who can write scripture (or can commission someone to write scripture) because his authority has been testified to by the signs wonders and miracles. This is the manner in which the miraculous gifts are very closely related to the revelatory gifts. Authority need not be established for one to exercise their spiritual gift of mercy, or teaching, or exhortation; they exercise their gifts without the need for miracles. But if someone claims to have new revelation we are commanded to establish their authority (Deut. 13 & 18)
- **John 9:30**
- These verses are truly remarkable, but the point for discussion is that Moses' authority was testified to by miracles. The man healed in this section knew exactly where Christ was from because of the miracles. The Pharisees were willing to listen to Moses but were not willing to listen to Christ.
- **John 10:25, John 14:11**
- **Spiritual gifts are always to be used to edify the body**
- **Romans 12:3-8**
- Nowhere in the Scriptures do we have any indication that a spiritual gift is given only to bless the recipient. In all cases, when properly administered, the gifts are given so that others in the body may be blessed and edified. Here Paul gives the admonition to consider others more highly than themselves and then encourages them to exercise their spiritual gifts. The fact that spiritual gifts are at the heart of major divisions within the church is no commentary on the gifts but rather on the hearts of men. The prideful desires for the appearance of spirituality or the contentious person who loves to cause debates and division are both sinners in need of confession and repentance.