

Having finished chapter 11 with Paul's statement, "the rest I will set in order when I come," Paul moves into another realm of controversy that challenged the Corinthian church and one that continues to challenge the universal church of Christ today. That is the topic of Spiritual Gifts.

This is distinguished apart from the fruits of the Spirit as described in Galatians chapter 5:22 -

[Gal 5:22-26 NASB] 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

The fruit of the Spirit is that natural growth that occurs in the life of the believer - by which we can very much discern one's spiritual condition - you tell a tree by the fruit that it bears - good or bad.

The gifts of the Spirit as we will see are given unto the church as the Spirit wills for the profit of the Body.

There are a lot of misconceptions regarding the gifts of the Spirit that stem out of denominationalism. By that I mean, that people have been taught a way to think about these gifts and they approach scripture in a way that then validates their perspective.

The broad categories are: continuationists or cessationists (DESCRIBE). Great bible teachers on both sides. Emotions can get high.

We also see on the far ends of the spectrum among the churches a potential to ignore blatant scriptural commands. This has led to what has been called charismania - used to describe those who have placed an overemphasis on the unbiblical exercise of spiritual gifts within the worship service.

That happens to be the category in which Corinth falls in. They received these spoken gifts and loved the opportunity to show them off - to the extent that they would derail a worship service in favor "operating in the Spirit" and then blame their bad manners and lack of "self-control" (one of the fruits of the spirit) on the moving of the Holy Spirit.

But - if the 3 are one - Father, Spirit, Son - then isn't God's consistent? The answer is Yes! That is what Paul addresses here in the next several chapters. Practical application - how to manual on conducting a worship service involving the spoken gifts of the Holy Spirit.

It is my conviction that if believers, seeking God's heart, would search the scriptures with humility and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance then they will be well equipped to exercise these gifts in a biblical and respectful manner and would not be twisting scripture to justify their perspective - one way or the other.

This coming from a guy who was a cessationist until probably the year 2006-ish. Christ challenged me with His word and I was able to see and participate in the biblical exercise of these gifts.

Perhaps he wants to do the same with some of us this morning.

v.1 - I do not want you to be ignorant - the implication is, there was a lot of ignorance - and sadly there still is. It takes a little humility to accept that. Remember Paul's heart is for them, as he calls to them, brethren...family. Don't be ignorant. How do you say that gently?

v.2 - a reminder of where they come from, but with a big purpose - 1. your olds gods didn't talk, didn't hear...the Living God speaks to His people and hears His people. Let that be our attitude considering these gifts - has God stopped speaking to His people? Certainly not.

[Isa 59:20-21 NASB] 20 "A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," declares the LORD. 21 "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring," says the LORD, "from now and forever."

[Jhn 14:16 NKJV] 16 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--

Our God speaks.

2. however you were led - inflection matters, tone of voice matters - a stark reminder of their previous condition and to be wary of tricks and deception. sometimes being overconfident causes us to cast off our reliance on God's word, and the Spirit and before we know it we are led as children to the pied piper down a path we don't recognize. This has of course happened to many a sincere believer especially in regards to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

v.3 - Therefore - since that is the case, there are some fundamentals that Paul begins addressing. The first is consistency of message of the Spirit in regards to the nature of Christ. The Holy Spirit says, "Jesus is Lord!" And we all say amen! False spirits, demonic spirits, or plain old trouble makers say otherwise.

That would be quite a trick to spot for the early church who had been set upon by judaizers in other places who sought to bring believers into the bondage of the commandment of men and legalism. For one to stand in the midst of the congregation and declare, "thus saith the Lord, Jesus is accursed, you must follow the Law, or follow me, or any number of disgusting things..." God's Spirit glorifies Christ.

[Jhn 15:26 NKJV] 26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

[Jhn 16:13-14 NKJV] 13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own [authority],

but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.
14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare [it] to you.

The Holy Spirit declares, and our hearts catch a spark when we hear His message "Jesus is Lord."

v.4-6 - diversities and differences.

We like to put things in neat, nice, boxes, with borders - one way or the other. We say - God only operates this way by His Spirit...the spiritual gifts aren't for today, and ministry looks one way, our way; and the things we do in our ministries are all done the same way because that's how God operates. Or, the only way to know if you're truly saved is if you speak in tongues or have some transcendental experience. Either perspective chooses to limit God's operations and betrays a limited focus on scriptural patterns of God moving. God has shown in His word that He will not be constrained by man's hang ups, attitudes, cultural norms, or limited vision. God chooses to use the weak, the foolish - against man's wisdom - to build His kingdom.

The gifting of His spiritual gifts to His saints is no different. There's no standard formula or starter package. They are diverse gifts, different ministries, diverse activities but the same Spirit, Lord, and God.

Look at that, a beautiful picture of the trinity - and you weren't even looking for it! Blessed be our God in heaven! When we begin to discuss these

things we must not lose focus on God himself while focusing on the tools, the gifts. Look to the one who gives from His hand. The one who speaks, and hears.

v.7 - manifestation - to make something real, palpable, tangible. The Spirit moves among us for real. He is with Christ's saints even as He promised, forevermore. He, the Spirit, the 3rd person of the trinity - equal in power and authority and holiness - is with us perpetually as promised, what a glorious thought. Notice, He, the Spirit, is not some intangible force that we cannot grasp though Christ's words about the Spirit speak volumes of His nature.

[Jhn 3:8 NKJV] 8 "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

You may not be able to see the Spirit moving, but you see the result - and we do see the result in changed lives, AND in these gifts that Paul is instructing the church on.

The Spirit is not the force, or magic, but a person, not subjecting people to His will - even as God will not violate your will, Christ will not force us to heel, the Holy Spirit will not dominate our wills - He comes along side to comfort, to convict, to move, to empower and equip for God's work - whereby when people witness the result they declare, "the Spirit is moving."

Finally, we see in v7 the purpose of the gifts that are given by the Holy Spirit, this is why they are named such, they are gifted to us by the Holy Spirit for the profit of all.

Not to call attention to myself, not to detract from worship but for the profit of all. Consider that as we move forward. The gifts given by the Spirit and practiced by the Saints are for the common good. It's about others. That's the unchanging nature of our Lord.