

The topic Paul addresses in chapters 12-14 is the exercise of the vocal gifts of the Spirit among the Body during worship meetings.

When we get to this portion of scripture people have all sorts of feelings. Perhaps excitement - looking for the Spirit to move God's people to exercise gifts we have only read about. Perhaps guarded - having seen the abuse of these gifts. Perhaps skeptical - denying the need for these gifts. Lots of very strong emotions and deeply entrenched thoughts come along with this topic.

Our approach is to simply take God at His word, bearing in mind the consistency of His nature towards His people (gracious, kind, loving, fatherly) AND bearing in mind that His word never fails.

So regardless of our feelings and thoughts we must allow God's word to be the standard by which we measure our emotions, our beliefs, our expectations. This can certainly be challenging.

Now, moving forward, we must remember that Paul is CORRECTING the church. Having received these gifts, they got caught up in some bad practical application when it came to working out these gifts.

One thing can be said to their credit - they openly received the Holy Spirit in their lives - they were confident of the Holy Spirit's ability to move and work among God's people. This is a characteristic that is unfortunately lacking in many churches today. We've closed the Holy Spirit out in some areas of

our worship and deny the active working of the third person of the trinity - God the Spirit.

I pray that we are open to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our ministry. I want to be open to what God wants to do in all His power and not our own.

Moving forward there is the very real likelihood that God wants to challenge some of us by His word. There's no need for fear, we know the Father - He is gentle and kind and gracious.

v.7 - For the profit of all, for the common good. Not as a distraction or disruption or side show or circus. If the exercise of any of the scriptural gifts of the spirit detracts from the common good then they are not from the Holy Spirit - they are from man's spirit.

There are plenty of examples of people exercising unbiblical behavior that are not spiritual gifts (holy laughter, slain in the spirit, bizarre behavior) Do we want man's spirit invading our worship services? Certainly not.

v.8-10 ALL gifts are by or through the Spirit - not ourselves, we cannot produce them - they are GIFTS.

There was a slogan used by a company in 1927 to advertise their wedding and engagement rings --Often imitated, never duplicated.

God's gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for the common good and cannot be duplicated by or through human effort.

BUT, That's how some get with the gifts of the Spirit - trying to fabricate or force or imitate them. That is one reason why so many people have been turned off to the gifts of the Spirit because they have perhaps seen abuse, or people forcing the gifts, or outright fakes! That is dangerous ground.

v.8 - word of wisdom - what is wisdom? the judicious application of knowledge. Christ demonstrated a tremendous gift of the word of wisdom. He knew exactly what to say, or not to say. Solomon is another example. This is a gift, wisdom. It's really a beautiful gift, to be able to offer Holy Spirit inspired wisdom.

This is not being wise in our own eyes, or gathering enough human experience to have intrinsic wisdom, this is God's supernatural wisdom. It is, I think exceedingly rare.

word of knowledge - this gift is receiving a special word from the Holy Spirit giving insight into something that you would have no other way of knowing.

Example: Joe & Ness and the kids.

Sometimes it comes from the pulpit. Example: Rosey moving.

Now, both of these - wisdom & knowledge - in their own right are not prophetic. If we have received a special word of wisdom or knowledge but keep it to ourselves - well is that for the common good? No. Once it is spoken - then that person is "speaking forth a word from God," that person

has entered into the realm of prophecy. Pretty cool! God can use you and I as prophets! Don't worry about the title - do the work, it's holy work.

[Joe 2:28 NKJV] ...I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...

v.9 - faith - what a gift. [Rom 12:3 NKJV] 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think [of himself] more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

GIFTS of healing - plural - spiritual, mental, emotional, physical. Does this happen? Certainly. Many of us have experienced or know others who have experienced a miraculous healing. This is one that many have trouble with because we have seen it abused as entertainment or as a hoax. So when an actual healing takes place sometimes we rationalize the healing away as a misdiagnosis, or something else. BUT we know that God is the great physician. Nothing is beyond his reach.

Afterglow - Dr. Henry Gainey - a medical doctor - writing on the gifts of the Holy Spirit says that physical healings don't supplant medicine but will hold up under medical scrutiny.

v.10 - working of miracles - literally: in-workings of mighty deeds; the Lord equips His saints by the Spirit to accomplish things that are outside their means or own devices.

prophecy - speaking forth, "thus saith the Lord" - word of wisdom or word of knowledge enter into the public realm for the common good. Teaching the Word, speaking forth God's Word, declaring by the Spirit "thus saith the Lord," can be prophetic.

Note: good, solid, doctrinally straight, mentally stimulating teaching can also be completely uninspired and devoid of the Spirit.

Knowing all of that we see when we frame prophecy Biblically it is not weird or threatening. It's for the common good. It is speaking forth God's word.

discerning of Spirits - listen to your spidey-sense, in conjunction with God's word; this is huge when it comes to discerning whether or not people are exercising counterfeit gifts of the spirit by their own might, or own will, or perhaps even demonically. The Holy Spirit helps us discern, gives us supernatural insight.

[Jhn 16:13 NKJV] 13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...

divers tongues - this is what everybody wants to talk about right? To speak in tongues or not to speak in tongues? Is it legit or are people carrying on some elaborate hoax to appear more spiritual than others? This is the gift that many get hung up on and decide it can't possibly be so.

It's unfortunate that the discussion on the gifts of the Holy Spirit is hyper-focused on the vocal gifts like tongues while making allowance for the others: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, etc.

Let's get the nuts and bolts up front. Is speaking in tongues a legitimate gift of the Holy Spirit? Yes, based on the simplest, most direct reading of God's inspired word.

This is one of those places where we, who say, "we believe the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, infallible, and the ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice," Do we really? If so, then we take God at His word.

AND, to skip ahead to chapter 14:39 [1Co 14:39 NKJV] 39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

We know that the Apostle's along with the very earliest disciples spoke in diverse tongues on Pentecost when they received the BAPTISM of the Holy Spirit:

[Act 2:4-12 NKJV] 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance...Then they (*the listeners*) were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 "And how [is it that] we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? ...we hear them speaking in our own tongues ***the wonderful works of God.***"

Angelic language v. human language - both - REF: 13:1 - more as we move through.

But as the church grew and people were getting saved we see that this miracle was not required for salvation nor was it the sole mark of having received the Holy Spirit.

*Incidentally, many churches confess that they want to be like the first century church - the church of Acts, but are mightily challenged when it comes to exercising the gifts as the first century church did.

(Peter and John after being released and threatened by the Jewish leaders have a home church service) [Act 4:31 NKJV] 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

The first deacons appointed had to be filled with the Spirit [Act 6:3, 8 NKJV] 3 "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of [good] reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ... 8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

Peter at Cornelius' house with the gentiles: [Act 10:44-48 NKJV] ...the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. 45 And those of the

circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues ***and magnify God...***

Paul comes across a church who had received good teaching from Apollos but not the Holy Spirit [Act 19:1-6 NKJV] ...Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard [this], they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

One thing is clear, when a believer receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit, when they are filled with the Spirit, and when the Spirit moves them - something powerful happens that magnifies God.

So we find - speaking in tongues is one of a myriad of gifts that the Bible teaches us that the Spirit pours out on Believers for the common good, for the benefit of the Body.

v.11 - one Spirit works all these things - there is diversity, we may not all receive the same gifts, praise the Lord for that or we would be a one string

guitar. The gifts that the Spirit gives are uniquely given to each - not because we are uniquely qualified for one or the other but because God wants to bless His people and will equip His saints for that work.

as He wills - all these diverse gifts are given according to His will, not ours. We may desire all of these gifts. We may earnestly desire to speak in tongues or prophecy but perhaps the Lord has gifted us with faith, or healing, or discernment.

v.12 - we are one Body with many different members - just as a Body has different members, each with an important function, so is the Body of Christ. Without all of the members we would be lacking, we would be off-balance, we would lose our depth perception. But when the Body is intact with all the diverse members, filled with the Spirit, serving the common good, then we are complete, ready to work.