

I CORINTHIANS: HANDLING BELIEVERS' PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

XVI. God's Guidance On Spiritual Gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40

A. Understanding God's Supernatural Gifts For Service

(1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. The people Paul disciplined in Corinth lived in a city that was known for its immorality, alcoholism and worldly pursuits (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: The City of Corinth," p. 1619), so the formidable influence of the city's culture on the Corinthian believers left Paul addressing "(a)berrant beliefs and practices of an astonishing variety" in his letters to them, Ibid.
- B. However, in a vision Paul received from God as he ministered at Corinth in Acts 18:10b NIV, God told him, "I have many people in this city," so Paul was to keep on ministering regardless of the trials he faced there.
- C. In 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Paul gave an overview of the supernatural gifts God gives to believers at salvation for them to perform effective spiritual service, so we view the passage for insight, application, and edification:

II. Understanding God's Supernatural Gifts For Service, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

- A. 1 Peter 4:10-11 teaches that every believer has received a supernatural gift from God for spiritual service.
- B. 1 Corinthians 12:1-5, 11 then reveals that these gifts are provided by the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, and one can discern that his supernatural enabling is of the Holy Spirit and not of a demonic spirit by the fact that the believer by the Holy Spirit confesses that Jesus is God where evil spirits claim that Jesus is accursed!
- C. The spiritual gifts vary widely in the ways they are applied, 1 Cor. 12:4-6: (1) There are various "gifts" or abilities from God (*charisma*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 887), v. 4, (2) there are various "ministries" (*diakonia*, Ibid., p. 183) in which the various abilities are used, v. 5, and (3) there are various "activities" (*energema*, Ibid., p. 265) in which the various abilities are used in the varying ministries, v. 6. [This vast array of God's application of the gifts shows it is unwise to compare ourselves with others!]
- D. Each spiritual gift performing in its respective role and activity is designed by the Lord to profit "the common good" – that is, the rest of the Church, not just to edify the person who has the gift, 1 Cor. 12:7 ESV, NIV.
- E. Paul explained this division of **some** of the gifts and **some** of their applications in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10:
 - 1. To one believer is given through the Holy Spirit the utterance of wisdom, 1 Corinthians 12:8a. Such a believer has the capacity to apply God's Word in a practical way that greatly edifies listeners.
 - 2. To another believer is given through the Holy Spirit the utterance of knowledge, 1 Corinthians 12:8b. Such a believer has the capacity to retain and recall Biblical facts to a significant degree so that he can teach others the truth in times of need for their understanding and edification.
 - 3. To another believer is given an unusual ability to believe God for achieving great things, 1 Cor. 12:9a.
 - 4. To another believer (in the Early Church era) was given the supernatural gift to heal anyone of any physical disease or injury, 1 Corinthians 12:9b.
 - 5. To another believer (in the Early Church era) was given the supernatural gift to perform miracles, v. 10a.
 - 6. To another believer (in the Early Church era) was given the supernatural gift to prophesy with perfect, consistent accuracy, 1 Corinthians 12:10b with Deuteronomy 18:20-22.
 - 7. To another believer was given the ability to discern between good and evil spirits, 1 Corinthians 12:10c.
 - 8. To another believer (in the Early Church era) was given the ability to speak in various human languages supernaturally (without having learned those languages), 1 Corinthians 12:10d ESV with Acts 2:7-11.
 - 9. To another believer (in the Early Church era) was given the ability to interpret different languages, v. 10e.
- F. Paul added that the Holy Spirit empowers each believer's spiritual gift for service, and He is also the One who "apportions" to each believer the gift that believer has as the Holy Spirit wills, 1 Corinthians 12:11. No believer thus chooses some spiritual gift that he would desire to possess, for what he has been given by the Holy Spirit is sovereignly given to him at salvation by the Holy Spirit!

Lesson: Every believer has been sovereignly assigned and given a supernatural spiritual gift for ministry that equips him under the Holy Spirit's enabling to minister in a special ministry with special activity to edify the rest of the body of Christ. One's supernatural gifting is thus discerned to be of the Holy Spirit by the believer's capacity to confess that Jesus is the Lord, what contrasts with evil spirits that call Jesus accursed.

Application: May we accept the spiritual gift that God has given us and use it in the ministry in which He has put us with the activities that we can perform with God's enabling for the spiritual edification of other believers.