

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part XXVII: Understanding Our Spiritual Gifting For Ministry

(1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. As seen in the misunderstandings about spiritual gifts that abound in various Christian circles, many believers wonder what are "spiritual gifts," why they are needed and if or how they can acquire some specific gift for some specific, effective Christian ministry.
- B. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 answers these questions, so we view the passage for our insight and edification:

II. Understanding Our Spiritual Gifting For Ministry, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

- A. Believers in Christ are utterly dependent on God the Holy Spirit for all spiritual understanding and enabling for spiritual effectiveness in ministry, the basis for spiritual gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:1-3:
 - 1. In starting to address spiritual gifts, Paul wanted his readers to know an important fact, namely, that before salvation and his reception of the Holy Spirit, the believer was helplessly led about by false teachers to worship dumb idols in spiritual darkness, 1 Corinthians 12:1-2; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 532.
 - 2. Thus, Paul wanted his Christian readers to know that no man speaking by means of the Holy Spirit says "Jesus is accursed!" and that no man can say, "Jesus is Lord!" but by the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:3. The spiritual dynamics are so immense as seen in how one needs the Lord even to make a correct, basic confession about Christ that every believer **needs God's supernatural enabling** to serve Him *effectively*.
- B. Accordingly, God has given supernatural spiritual "gifts" or enablings to believers as follows, 1 Cor. 12:4-6:
 - 1. The same God has given "differing allotments" (*diairesis*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 182) of spiritual "gifts" (*charisma*, *Ibid.*, p. 887), or abilities for service, 1 Corinthians 12:4.
 - 2. The same God has given differing allotments (*diairesis* again, cf. v. 4) of "ministries, offices" (*diakonia*, *Ibid.*, p. 183), or ministry assignments in which these abilities are to be used, 1 Corinthians 12:5.
 - 3. The same God has given differing allotments (*diairesis* again, cf. v. 4, 5) of "activities" (*energema*, *Ibid.*, p. 265), actual workings with an ability in a ministry assignment for a special effect for God, 1 Cor. 12:6.
 - 4. [To illustrate, one may have the **gift** of "faith" used in the **office** of "Nepaug Church Prayer Chain" with the **activity** of "encouraging believers who face dire trials in their lives to trust the Lord for results!"]
- C. Every believer has been given from God such a supernatural spiritual gift to be used in the ministry assigned him by God through a special working for edifying the whole rest of the church body, 1 Cor. 12:7 ESV, NIV.
- D. Paul then gave a list of differing gifts the Holy Spirit had given to various believers in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, and some of these gifts exist today while others we believe have now ceased to exist (as follows):
 - 1. The Holy Spirit has given to some the word of "wisdom" (*sophia*, *Ibid.*, p. 766-767), applying knowledge with the best means and ends in view, 1 Cor. 12:8a; Richard C. Trench, Syns. of the N. T., 1973, p. 283.
 - 2. The Spirit has given to some the word of "knowledge" (*gnosis*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 605; *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 162-163), the capacity to acquire, recall and apply spiritual facts, 1 Cor. 12:8b.
 - 3. The Holy Spirit has given a special ability to trust God for results, the gift of "faith," 1 Cor. 12:9a.
 - 4. Other gifts Paul named that we believe no longer exist are (a) healing, (b) working miracles, (c) prophecy (d) discerning spirits, (e) speaking God's Word in other human languages and (f) interpreting the utterances of those who ministered God's Word in such human languages, 1 Corinthians 12:9b-10.
- E. However, all of these spiritual gifts assigned in specific ministries with their varying kinds of divinely assigned activities for special effects come from the same Holy Spirit Who disperses them to every believer as **He** "desires, wills" (*boulomai*, *Ibid.*, p. 145-146). Opposite the belief of many today, no believer decides what gift, ministry assignment or active effect he is to have, for the Holy Spirit sovereignly determines all of this!

Lesson: *Since apart from the Holy Spirit's enabling we believers would be utterly unable to minister spiritually or even to make a proper confession about Christ, God has graciously, sovereignly assigned each of us a supernatural gift to be used in a specific ministry assignment from God with a specific assigned effect for the good of the whole local body. Since the believer has no part in deciding what gift, ministry and effect he will have, he must submit to the Holy Spirit's leading and gifting of him to serve Christ for the good of the whole body where God assigns him.*

Application: *(1) May we accept and "fan into flame," namely, develop the supernatural gift we have been assigned of God (cf. 2 Timothy 1:6-7) in the ministry assignment He gives us with the special effects produced by its activity for the good of the rest of the body of Christ. (2) May we appreciate the ministries of all other believers unto us.*