



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians

Chapter 12

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Introduction

- In this chapter St. Paul begins to address the issue of spiritual gifts
- Jealousy and envy characterized the division at Corinth and also expressed itself in their use (and abuse) of certain spiritual gifts
- Expressing his concern, St. Paul first emphasizes that spiritual gifts, though diverse, come from the same Spirit and are to be used for the benefit of all (1-11)



Introduction

- To demonstrate that every person (and spiritual gift) is important, He compares the church to a body with many different yet essential members (12-27)
- The chapter closes with St. Paul pointing out that not all serve the same function and have the same gifts, encouraging them to earnestly desire the best gifts, and preparing to show them a more excellent way in the next chapter (28-31)

Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity (12:1-11)



- The supernatural gifts bestowed in the early church by the Spirit
- These were especially needful, before the church had the New Testament as a guide, and in the inauguration of Christianity
- He gives the reason why the Corinthians needed instruction as to spiritual gifts, namely, their past heathen state, wherein they had no experience of intelligent spiritual powers

Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity (12:1-11)



- How should they test those professing to speak by the divine Spirit?
- If a heathen priest professed to speak by the spirit and called Jesus accursed, he had not the Spirit of God
- If one speaking by the spirit pronounced Jesus the Lord, he had the Holy Spirit
- This confession from the heart is always moved by the Spirit

Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity (12:1-11)



- The especial gifts of the Spirit imparted to fit members of various duties, are now discussed
- These are various in their manifestations, but all proceed from the same Spirit
- Different ministries and activities but all are of the same God
- The inward workings of the Spirit are not always the same, but it is the same God, who causes them all

Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity (12:1-11)



- The object of this section is to show that one divine source accounts for spiritual gifts diverse in their manifestations
- However varied these manifestations, all are given to every man to profit all
- No gift of the Spirit is for the benefit of the recipient
- Wisdom: The ability to reveal divine truth
- Knowledge. The aptitude to teach unerringly

Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity (12:1-11)



- Faith: Not that faith as virtue, which comes by hearing (Rom 10:17), but that faith which carried miraculous power (1 Cor 13:2; Mt 17:20)
- Prophecy: To speak words give by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
- Discerning of spirits: The power of reading hearts and determining whether men spoke by the divine spirit, or some other impulse
- Tongues: Speaking languages (Acts 2:6-8)

Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity (12:1-11)



- Sometimes their utterances were not understood by the audience. Hence another gift was
- The interpretation of tongues: The ability to explain the meaning of tongues
- There are nine gifts named in 1 Cor 12:8-10 but all of them are imparted by the same Spirit
- Each believer has received at least one gift
- These gifts are distributed according to His own will

Unity and Diversity in One Body (12:12–31)



- The unity of these diverse gifts is illustrated by the human body, which has many members with different functions, but all parts of one body
- No member could claim that it was not of the body because it is not the eye or some other organ
- Each is a part, each necessary, each set where God pleased, and all taken together make up the body
- So also is the spiritual body of Christ, the church

Unity and Diversity in One Body (12:12–31)



- By means of one spirit we were all baptized into one body whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free
- Though diverse in race and condition, all have been made parts of one body by baptism, and this had been done under the direction of one spirit
- All, receiving it as a gift, drank of the same spirit
- Hence, if special and extraordinary spiritual gifts were imparted to the members of this body, these would be due to one spirit

Unity and Diversity in One Body (12:12–31)



- It could not be a body if it did not consist of many members, and those being different
- The humble speaks of the more honorable member which most nearly resembles itself
- The foot and hand represent men of active life; the ear and eye, those of contemplative life
- Superior as the eye is, it would not do if it were the sole member to the exclusion of the rest
- As it pleased Him: according to His wisdom

Unity and Diversity in One Body (12:12–31)



- Where were the body: which, by its very idea, "has many members"
- But one body: And it is a necessary result of this unity, that the several members need one another
- Every member of the body has its place and is needed by every other member
- The members which appear to be weaker: Being of a more delicate and tender structure

Unity and Diversity in One Body (12:12–31)



- We think the feet and the belly "less honorable," though not really so in the nature of things
- Bestow honor: putting shoes on the feet, and clothes to cover the belly
- Un-presentable parts: the secret parts
- Modesty: By the help of dress
- Giving more abundant honor to that which lacked: As being cared for and served by the noblest parts

Unity and Diversity in One Body (12:12–31)



- No schism: no disunion; referring to the "divisions" noticed (1 Cor 11:18)
- We Should bestow our gifts to the profit and preservation of the whole body
- Suffer with it: all the members regard the affected member with intense gaze" [Chrysostom]
- Rejoice with it: "When the head is crowned, the whole man feels honored, the mouth expresses, and the eyes look, gladness" [Chrysostom]

Unity and Diversity in One Body (12:12–31)



- All were baptized into one body (1 Cor 12:13), and hence are severally members or parts of the one body, with gifts to discharge like those of the members of the human body
- Nine positions in the church are now given, to each the Spirit granted the special gifts required
- Apostles: The twelve, seventy two, St. Paul, and such evangelists as Barnabas and others; men sent by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel

Unity and Diversity in One Body (12:12–31)



- Prophets: See 1 Cor 12:10
- Teachers: Men gifted by the spirit to teach
- Miracles: Those who had power to work miracles
- Healing: miraculous power of healing is granted
- Helps: Spiritual aid granted to helpers
- Administration” The administrative abilities
- Tongues: 1Cor 12:10
- Only a few had each gift given them

Unity and Diversity in One Body (12:12–31)



- The difference between the gift and the fruit
- Are tongues sign of being filled with the Spirit?
- The Spirit "divides to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor 12:1); but this does not prevent men earnestly seeking, by prayer and watchfulness, and cultivation of their faculties, the greatest gifts
- Besides recommending your zealous desire for the greatest gifts, I am about to show you a something still more excellent "the way of love"

Conclusion



- Why were the manifestations of the Spirit given?
- Who determined who received what gift?
- What part does the Holy Spirit play in our conversion and sanctification?
- Can any member of the body say that they or the others are not important?
- What indication is there in this chapter that at least some of the spiritual gifts or functions were temporary?
- Was there anything wrong with the Corinthians desiring the "best gifts"?