

"Diversity In Unity"

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

INTRO:

We are beginning our exploration of the trilogy of chapters on “spiritual gifts.” The Apostle Paul's term for these gifts was not “spiritual gifts,” but rather “grace gifts.”

Paul wrote **chapters 12-14** to answer the Corinthians' questions concerning these gifts. No doubt the main question asked was: “Does the presence of spiritual gifts, specifically showy gifts demonstrate a person is super-spiritual?” The Apostle Paul took them back to where they were before the Lord saved them (**v. 2**). They once were under the influence of sin. He wanted them to remember that God had to save them and their salvation came through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their individual lives. In short, Christians do not receive the gift of the Spirit of God in their lives after salvation, but at the time of salvation. If the Spirit of God had not taken up residence in their lives, nothing would have changed; they would still be cursing Christ instead of loving Him.

In our text today, Paul told them how they received the gifts. In **verses 4-7**, he made two major points about the gifts. First, the gifts are diverse in character but they come from one source, the triune God. Second, the gifts purpose is to benefit the whole body

I. Diversity In The Unity (v. 4-6)

II. Why God Gave the Gifts (v. 7)

I. Diversity In The Unity (v. 4-6)

A. *“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”* (1 Corinthians 12:4–7)

The first word of **v.4** in the Greek text is the word translated “*diversities*.” This word appears three times in **verses 4-6** and is key to the building of the parallelism that Paul wants us to see in these verses.

1. The Greek word means literally “*distributions*” or “*apportionments*.” It also carries with it the idea of “*varieties*.”

2. Paul chose this word to include two ideas about the charismata. They are given or distributed to us by God, Himself, and there are many different kinds of gifts given to believers.

B. **Verse 4** is the first of three parallel statements.

“Now there are different kinds of gifts given to us, but the same Spirit.”

1. The lists of grace gifts found in the New Testament clearly demonstrates the varieties of gifts. Here is just a partial list: teaching, administration, prophecy, faith, helps, mercy, healing, and speaking in tongues. The question is whether the lists are meant to be exhaustive or illustrative. This is a question that is never authoritatively answered in the Scriptures. However, it seems clear that the lists are just a sample list of the kinds of gifts that are available.

2. Another observation is that in all of the texts listing spiritual gifts, none of them ever give any authority to creating a test to determine what gift a person possesses. Finding your spiritual gift is not accomplished through a test. It comes through being busy in serving the Lord. As we serve, each of us will discover that there are some things at which God made us especially proficient. Others will notice it too and give us valuable insight into what our gift or gifts are. The particular gift or gifts that you have may look different in your ministry to others than in the life of someone else who has a similar gift.

3. Whatever our gift, and however different it may be, the same [one and only] Holy Spirit of God gave it to us.

C. **(v. 5)** Not only are there a difference in the distributions of the gifts, there is variety in the giving of places of service.

“And there are varieties of ministries [or places of ministry], and the same Lord.”

1. The word can mean service or even places of service. The ways in which we use our gifts in the serving of others is in various ways.

2. The Lord Jesus, whom we serve, is the same. He providentially hands out the assignments and He is ultimately the One we are serving as we serve others.

Colossians 3:23–24 gives the sense of what is being said.

“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”

D. (v. 6) Finally, there is variety in the giving of the workings of those gifts, but the same God and Father who works in them all.

“There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.”

The charismata, are a divine enablement for service because God Himself works through them to accomplish what He wants to accomplish.

II. Why God Gave the Gifts (v. 7)

A. Now that we understand the diversity of the gifts and the unity of the God who gave them, we must understand the purpose for the gifts. Paul makes two important points in this verse. **(1 Corinthians 12:7)**

“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

First, each and every believer has received some grace gift. When the Spirit of God took residence in our lives, He also gave each of us some grace gift to enable each of us to minister for Him.

B. Second, the gifts are given to the benefit the whole body. God has given the gifts not for our own benefit only, but especially so the entire body can benefit from the expression of our gifts. Peter said the same thing in different words. **(1 Peter 4:10)**

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

We must seek to serve God so we can discover what our spiritual gifts are. Once we discover what our grace gifts are, we need to use them in ministry to the local body of believers. We must not think that if we know what our gifts are, that is all that we do. God did not make us specialists. He just gave us special abilities to minister in His church.