

Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 addresses the topic of spiritual gifts (miraculous abilities). There are several points to keep in mind as you read through these three chapters:

- 1- Miraculous power did not bring peace and unity to Corinth. Most people today believe miracles are the end-all blessing, yet Corinth had miraculous power and still had issues untold.
- 2- 1 Corinthians 12:11 states, “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” In other words, other than the apostles, Christians were given one miraculous gift per individual, and the Holy Spirit himself determined what that gift would be. The church therefore needed multiple miracle workers present to have the full benefit of miracles. The single gift per person point is further established and developed in 1 Corinthians 12:29-31 where Paul asks his series of rhetorical questions.
- 3- The miraculous age was not an ideal situation. Verse 31 is translated, “But earnestly desire the best^[a] gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.” Rather than translating Paul’s statement as a command (imperative mood), it can be (and should be) translated as a statement (indicative mood) and would read, “You earnestly desire the best gifts, but I show you a better way.” Paul seems to be giving an assessment of these brethren while correcting their poor thinking by teaching them that there is a better way than miraculous power: there is full revelation.
- 4- Chapter 13 explains how miracles would pass away once “that which is perfect has come.” “That which is perfect” refers to the complete word or the New Testament – not Jesus. Those who interpret “that which is perfect” in reference to Jesus cannot explain why miracles such as the raising of the dead will take place when Christ returns rather than ceasing.

Once the apostles and prophets finished writing down the New Testament miraculous abilities would fade away because nothing further would need to be revealed. Though the early church could work many wonders, the church today can have full knowledge. The church of today should not long to regress into a former state of childhood (1 Corinthians 13:11), but rather walk with clearer vision (1 Corinthians 13:12).

- 5- Two of the key verses in chapter 14 are verses 32-33. Miraculous abilities were not an excuse to have chaos in the assemblies of the church. Men could and were required to control themselves and their miraculous power. Miracles were to bring knowledge and peace – not ignorance and chaos.

- 6- Above all things, keep in mind that miracles were always connected to a divine message. If miracles are still possible today it could only mean that further revelation was needed, yet we know such is not the case (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3).

May the Lord's church always appreciate the gift of the completed word and all the efforts that went into revealing and preserving it. As you do your daily reading realize you are living in the day the apostles and prophets longed to see.