

## GIFTS IN 1 CORINTHIANS 12

Paul here sets forth fully the diversity of the gifts, but checks any tendency to boastful comparison by showing that the gifts emanate from a common source, and are operated by a common will, and are bestowed according to the pleasure of the Spirit, and not because of any inferiority or superiority on the part of the recipients. The nine gifts spoken of may be described as follows:

1. The "word of wisdom" was the ability to reveal divine truth which was possessed by the apostles and partially by prophets.
2. The "word of knowledge" was the ability to teach the truth thus revealed. Paul emphasizes that the second gift was as much a work of the Spirit as the first.
3. "Faith," in this connection, is more than that which comes by hearing. It is that energy of faith which carries with it divine power (Matt. 17: 19, 20; ch. 13: 2).
4. "Gifts of healing" was the power to supernaturally restore the sick (Acts 5: 15, 16; Jas. 5: 14, 15). This gift may have been separated from the one next named, because some had their miraculous power limited to this field.
5. "Workings of miracles" was larger than the one which preceded it, for it included acts of judgment as well as mercy. It was exercised by Paul in striking Elymas blind, and by Peter in the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira. Paul here names healing first possibly because those who are called upon to exercise God's mercy stand higher in his esteem than those who execute his judgment, for pagans and unbelievers have often been used by God to mete out punishment. But in verse 28 he reverses the order, for the greater includes the less.
6. The "gift of prophecy" enabled one to speak the truth under the unerring guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament this gift was a very important one; but in the New, the "word of wisdom," which embraced all the larger scope of prophecy, seems to have been mainly confined to the apostles, and so we find New Testament prophets merely foretelling things of a temporary or personal nature, as in the case of Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:9-11).
7. "Discernings of spirits" was the power to recognize the difference between the utterances of genuine inspiration and those of a demoniacal or an unaided human spirit.
8. There has been much dispute as to what is meant by "kinds of tongues." Some modern commentators have attempted to show that the gift of tongues mentioned in the Epistles was entirely different from the ability to speak foreign languages manifested on the day of Pentecost. Speaking with tongues was not an incoherent, meaningless jargon uttered by the speaker in ecstatic rhapsody, nor was it "spiritual language unknown to man, uttered in ecstasy. The second chapter of the Book of Acts shows us clearly what it was, and the New Testament never explains it as being anything less or different.
9. "Interpretation of tongues" was the ability to interpret what was said by the one who spoke with tongues. The gifts of speaking and interpreting were sometimes given to the same person (14:13), and sometimes to different persons.