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The Source and Testing of Counterfeit Spiritual Gifts

12: 1-3

The source and testing of counterfeit spiritual gifts DIG: Why is the content rather than the experience of the speech the most important? How is the diversity of gifts related to the unity of the Father, Son and Spirit? How can you tell if a teaching or practice is from God or a counterfeit? Why is there no new revelation for believers today?

REFLECT: As far as being “led astray” by idols, what are some modern-day idols? Can a man’s job be an idol? Can a woman’s family be an idol? What other seemingly innocent idols lead people astray today? Sports? Money? Hobbies? How is your ability to discern between what is of God and what is of Satan? Have you ever been fooled? What is the remedy?

Satan will try to counterfeit the Spirit’s gifts, and he will try to induce believers to ignore, neglect, misunderstand, abuse, and pervert them, so Paul’s teaching here is critical.

Paul begins with the importance of a clear recognition of the lordship of **Messiah**. There are many **spiritual gifts** and **they** all bring glory to **Messiah**. **They** never oppose **Him**. **Paul** wanted to make sure **the Corinthians** had a clear and complete understanding of **their spiritual gifts**, the special ministry that **the Spirit** gives in some measure to all believers. The Church, made up of Jewish and Gentile believers, cannot function, and certainly not mature, without properly and faithfully using **the gifts the Spirit** gives to **His people** for ministry.

The importance of spiritual gifts: Paul wanted the **Corinthians** to understand there are also counterfeit gifts, so **he** wrote to them saying: **Now concerning spiritual [gifts], brothers, I do not want you to go on being ignorant (12:1)**. With the phrase **now concerning** (Greek: *peri de*), **Paul** again cues **his** readers that **he** is taking up a new topic. In this case, it signals that the topic comes from **the Corinthians’ letter to him (7:1 and 25, 8:1)**.³⁴⁹ Notice the affectionate

address of **brothers**, introducing a section where there would be much rebuke.³⁵⁰
The Corinthians were not acting very spiritual, but **they** still belonged to
Messiah.

The source of counterfeit spiritual gifts: Paul starts **his** instruction by reminding **the Corinthians** of **their pagan** past, before **they** had experienced **the Spirit's** power in **their** lives, saying: **You know that when you were pagans** (see the commentary on **Romans, to see link click An - The Deprived Mind of the Pagan Gentile**). Paul has already called **them brothers**, so we know that **he** was addressing Gentile believers. However, **they** were not acting like believers, **they** were acting like **pagans**, and one of the chief characteristics of most **pagan** religions was, and still is, **idolatry**. **No matter how you felt** before being saved, **you were being led astray** (Greek: *apago*, often used of prisoners being under armed guard to prison or execution). Therefore, some of the **Corinthian** believers, like drug addicts who can't kick the habit, were reverting back to **idolatry (12:a)**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being our **Almighty God**! Thank **You** that **You** live in **Your** children. **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23)**. What a comfort that **You** always are with **Your** children, giving us the ability to win battles against **sin**, by the power of your **Ruach Ha'Kodesh** living within us. **After you heard the message of truth - the Good News of your salvation - and when you put your trust in Him, you were sealed with the promised Ruach Ha'Kodesh (Eph 1:13)**. Addictions to **sin** are strong, but **You** are always stronger!*

*Thank you for **Your** powerful **Ruach Ha'Kodesh** never leaving me but always being the strength needed to win any battle. Thank you that the **Ruach Ha'Kodesh** cannot be bought with money or with good deeds but **You** give **Him** to all who love **You**. **You** chose us **in the Messiah**. . . **You** predestined us for adoption as sons and daughters **through Messiah Yeshua**, in **Whom** we have redemption **(Ephesians 1:4a, 5a, 7a)**. It is all about **You** dear **Father God**. We cannot begin to comprehend **Your** great power to create the world in the beginning and at the end your awesome power to win the battle against all the evil kings and satanic powers in this world **(Revelation 19)**. Just as **Yeshua** will come riding in victoriously on a white horse at the last battle - so **Your** children can be victorious over any **sin** as long as we rely on **Your Ruach Ha'Kodesh** to fight the battle. We love **You** for being such a wonderful **Father**! In **Your** holy **Son's** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

One of the most common misconceptions about the ungodly lifestyle - a misconception held by many immature believers - is that it is free of boundaries, in contrast to a godly lifestyle, which they believe is hemmed in by rigid restrictions. However, as **Paul** teaches in this passage, just the opposite is true. It is the unbeliever, or the carnal believer, who is held captive by **sin** and by Satan. Before conversion, when the **Corinthian** believers **were pagans, they** had no choice. But here, **Paul** skillfully reminds **them** that now **they do** have a choice, and **he** pleads with **them** to allow **the Spirit** to lead **them** rather than **their** old **sin** nature (see the commentary on **Romans Bm - The Consequences of Adam**).

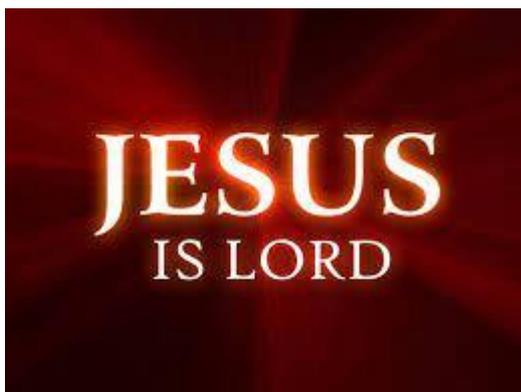
Paul reminded **them**: “**You were led astray by idols, which can’t speak at all**” (see the commentary on **Isaiah Hy - Worship the LORD, Not Idols**). **Paul** is not referring to unintelligent speech, but speechless, literally *without voice* (**12:2b**). No **idol**, primitive or sophisticated, can answer a person’s questions, give any revelation, assure anyone of their faith, forgive **sin**, or give anyone dignity, meaning, or peace. Whether or not **a demon** is behind it (see **Bs - The Truth About Idolatry**), an **idol** is totally helpless to benefit anyone who worships **it**. Tragically, many of the **Corinthian** believers had fallen back into some of **their** old **idolatrous** practices. **They** could no longer distinguish the work of **God’s Spirit** from that of demonic spirits; **God’s** true **spiritual gifts** from Satan’s counterfeits, or the true worship of **God** from the perverted false worship of **idols**.³⁵¹

The test of spiritual gifts: Satan spends a lot of time in church. Nowhere is he more anxious to pervert **God’s** people than where they are worshiping. Some immature, baby believers, apparently became so fleshly and confused, and their worship so trance-like and frenzied, that in a state of **ecstasy** (see **Ce - The Pagan Backgrounds of Counterfeit Spiritual Gifts**), **they** even allowed themselves to **curse the Lord** during public worship. In that hysterical atmosphere anything might happen and be claimed to be the work of **the Spirit**. Therefore, **Paul** rebuked the entire congregation for allowing such ungodliness, and for being so confused about what was spiritual and what was demonic. Before **Paul** begins **his** discussion of the various **spiritual gifts** and **their** use, **he** gives two principles, one **negative** and one **positive** to help **the Corinthians** and us determine what comes from **God** and what does not. These are the first of several tests **the apostle** mentions in **Chapters 12-14**.

The negative test: The first test of a spiritual gift is doctrinal. If a person holds a derogatory view of **Jesus Christ**, then what he or she says or does is not of **God**. **Therefore, I want to make it clear to you that no one**

speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, “Jesus is cursed (Greek: *anathema*)!” The word *anathema* is similar to the Hebrew word *cherem*, meaning *devoted to destruction*. Those who were babbling: **Jesus is cursed**, claimed to be speaking by **the Spirit of God**, demonstrating the gift of prophecy or teaching. But **Paul** told **the Corinthians** that no such blasphemy could possibly be uttered by **the Holy Spirit**. Nothing should have been more logical or obvious, but **the Corinthians** had come to judge that nature and use of **spiritual gifts** on the basis of experience and feelings of **ecstasy**. Nowhere in Scripture do we see real **gifts** of **the Spirit** operating when someone is out of control or under some sort of supernatural seizure. Nowhere does the B’rit Chadashah teach that **the Spirit of God** causes believers to fall into a trance, faint, or lapse into **ecstatic** behavior. On the contrary, **the fruit of the Spirit is self-control** (see the commentary on [Galatians Ce - The Fruit of the Ruach is Self-Control](#)). **Therefore, get your minds ready for work, keep yourselves under control, and fix your hopes fully on the gift you will receive when Jesus Christ is revealed (First Peter 1:13).**³⁵²

Even today, new immature believers, coming out of **the world (First John 2:15-17)**, far too often fall back into worldly behaviors we cannot fathom. They **sin** up a storm. They ask questions like, “Is it OK if I am living with my girlfriend?” What? Of course not! But babies make messes don’t they. And that is what baby believers do when they fall back into **the world** from which they came. Sanctification takes a lifetime (**Romans (8:29b)**).



The positive test: The second test is also doctrinal, but is simply the reverse side of the negative. **Paul** declares that **the Holy Spirit** empowers those who say, **“Jesus is Lord” (12:3)**. Of course, **Paul** is speaking of a sincere confession. A sneering unbeliever may easily mouth the words, but he is not



sincere. **Paul** reminds **the Corinthians** that since the confession of our faith is **Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9)**, anything contrary to this could not possibly be motivated by **the Spirit of God**, and thus, counterfeit. **Paul** is simply using this dramatic example of **cursing Jesus** to emphasize that those who are inspired by **the Spirit** will speak and act in ways that glorify the lordship of **Jesus**.