

Paul is writing this letter primarily to the believing Jews in Corinth. In verse 2 he uses the term “Ye were Gentiles.” The word Gentiles is *ethnos* in the Greek which means nations. These were Jews who had been “carried away” among the nations. The plain fact that Paul addresses this to the church in Corinth should be evidence that he is not making a doctrine about spiritual gifts. In fact, he highlights, *gifts* (vs. 4), *administrations* (vs.5), and *operations* (vs. 6) and he calls them all *the manifestation of the Spirit* (vs.7). A manifestation is something that is seen and is visible. There were manifestations of the spirit in the Corinth church and they were given to *every man to profit withal*.

The *gifts* saw last week were used in the Corinth church as **the mouth piece of God. They were the vehicle through which God communicated to man before the completion of the Word of God. When God’s word was complete these gifts ceased in their function**

## Various members, One body of Christ | 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Verse 12—

In chapter 11 Paul wrote about divisions in the Church of Corinth. They had forgotten they were one body, the body of Christ. In the previous verses (4-11), Paul was discussing the manifestations of the Spirit, which are given to individual members but only for the purpose of the whole. Now he discusses the makeup of the whole body by using an example of the physical body.

Verse 13, 14—

The context has been a division in the Church. Paul may be talking about lowercase **spirit** (pneuma) here and not the Holy Spirit. The capitalized Spirit is an editorial choice. In other words, ***we are all of the same spirit as we are baptized into one body***, and ***we all made to drink of one spirit*** (not water baptism; everyone is immersed into one body). We are not divided; we are one in spirit. **For the body is not one member, but many**—every action of the individual affects the whole. **Jews**=Judeans, **Gentiles**=Hellen, or Greeks.

Verses 15-24—

Just as God has done for the physical body, he has given certain individual roles for the body of Christ, the Church. The point is that the entire body support and work together.

Verse 25, 26—

When one part of the human body works against another part, the result is pain. The same in the Church, **there should be no schism**. The word schism can be translated as division, but also to tear. Just as we are careful not to tear our own body, we should **have the same care one for another**. There should not be an individualistic approach to the functioning of the Church. We suffer and rejoice together. The plural suffers along with the singular and the plural rejoice with the singular.

Verse 27—

It is the local Church that is **the body of Christ**, notice the pronoun **ye** (second person plural, not third-person singular). The New Testament never describes a universal body of Christ, or a universal church. If there were a universal body, there would have to be a universal leader and the local churches would be its members. But that is not how Paul describes the body. Each local Church, under the leadership of their pastor, who is under the head of Christ, functions as a complete entity.

## Order in the First Century Church | 1 Corinthian 12:28-31

Verse 28—

Any organization needs order in its structure, and the Church is no different. There are different roles within the Church (as evidenced already with Paul’s illustration of the body). Likewise, Paul says there are priorities in the roles. 1)Apostles. 2) Prophets. 3) Teachers. 4) Miracles. 5) Gifts of healings, helps, governments, and diversities of tongues.

These are not all operational in the Church today. **God hath set some** does not mean he continues to do so today.

See Ephesians 4:8,11—Bible teachers have said that the gifts of apostle and prophet are no longer being given but evangelist, pastor, and teacher are. What in the context gives us the right to make this distinction? Notice in Ephesians 4:11, “gave” is a past tense word. Ephesians was written late in Paul’s life, the earliest date is AD 64, and some say even later, AD 68; Paul is writing as if the gifts have already been given.

We still need people today to do the work of an evangelist, pastor, or teacher, but the difference is in how these things are accomplished. In 1 Timothy 3:1, these offices are created by the word of God creating within men the desire to want to serve. Not by divine manifestation of the Spirit.

Therefore, an evangelist (one who loves sharing the gospel), a pastor, or a teacher are not specially chosen or anointed by God above others in the church. They have themselves chosen to spend more time sharing and studying the word of God, and the local church has recognized that and called them to minister within that local body.

My conclusion, which should be questioned, is that there are no *spiritual gifts* imparted to the church today. We are complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10) and we have the Word of God to communicate to man.

Verses 29-31—

There are seven rhetorical questions that must be answered with “No.” **But covet earnestly the best gifts.** This is not an individual desire, but the desire for the body of Christ. *You, as the Corinth church, should desire that the best gifts be made manifest in your Church. And yet I show unto you a more excellent way.* I am going to show you something even better than spiritual gifts.

### What about Charity? | 1 Corinthians 13:1

In 12:31 Paul says he will *show unto you a more excellent way*. Why do the Corinthians need a more excellent way? Because there is coming a time when the *manifestations of the Spirit* will no longer be given.

Verse 1—

Even **Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels.** There are a couple of possibilities when it comes to the **tongues...of angels**. The most popular view is that there is some sort of heavenly angelic language. This interpretation is popular among Charismatics today in that they teach *speaking in tongues* as some kind of supernatural spiritual language.

Another view, the one which I hold, is that is that the **tongues of men and of angels** is the same known language. Whenever an angel speaks in Scripture, whether it be in the Old Testament or the New Testament, the hearer always heard him in his own language, perhaps Hebrew, or maybe Aramaic. This makes common sense since the first use of tongues in Acts, we find that when the disciples spoke with *other tongues* (Acts 2:4), those nearby *heard them speak in his own language*. In fact, the *other tongues* that were spoken at Pentecost, in Acts 2, were known languages.

Acts 2:6: “Every man heard them speak in his own *language* (Greek: *dialektos*).

Acts 2:8: “And how hear we every man in our own *tongue* (Greek: *dialektos*).

On the other hand, why would Paul even make mention of **tongues of angels** if it were not some kind of language? Regardless of which view one holds, it is impossible to develop a doctrine or conclusion based on three words, **and of angels**. The tongues of men and of angels is not Paul’s point—either way there is something that trumps tongues, it is **charity**.

Without **charity**, regardless of how one speaks, he will have **become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal**. Paul could have a brass instrument in mind, or he could be thinking of the clanging of metal objects. The word for **brass** is translated *money* two times. In Mark 12:41 it’s used of money being cast into the treasury. But, Paul could mean a trumpet or musical instrument that isn’t played properly (See 14:8). The word **tinkling** is translated one other time as *wailed*. **Cymbal** is only used here and it is from the root word *kuma* which could mean to swell, or bend, or curve. The idea might be the rising and falling of someone wailing. In both cases he seems to be referring to meaningless sound if there is no Charity. We will see more on *tongues* when we get to chapter 14.

Why does the KJV use the word **Charity**? The Greek word is *agape* and it is translated **love** 92 times in other passages. There must have been some reasoning behind their use of **Charity** in some instances and *love* in others. I don’t think any other translation, old or modern, uses the word **Charity**. Even the 1599 Geneva Bible translates the word *agape* here as **love**. Some believe the KJV translators used **Charity** to show the context is dealing with a *believer’s love toward another believer*. Whatever their reasoning, and whether you use the word **charity** or love, it is *agape*, and it doesn’t change Paul’s reason for using the word *agape*. If you don’t have it, you’re just a noise maker.