

The Fire of the Lord

an introduction to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit

Sometimes spoken of as 'the forgotten Person' of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit exercises a hugely important ministry in the outworking of the purpose of God.

This series of 7 introductory studies is intended to deepen your understanding of what that ministry is, and transform your experience through the enjoyment of that ministry in your life.

You can find the background to this short series [here](#).

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6. The gifts of the Spirit

(1 Corinthians 12.¹⁻¹⁴)

[w/b Sunday 2nd June 2019]

“.. for the common good ..”

One of the basic truths about the work of the Spirit which we've seen is that He brings things together. If the 'fruit of the Spirit' is His (helping-us-to-get-our-act-together) work in our personal living for God, the bestowal of the 'gifts of the Spirit' is His (getting-our-act-together) work in our communal service of God.

As by the Spirit we exercise our gifts rightly (ch.12), love our neighbour warmly (ch.13), and worship our God appropriately (ch.14), so we proclaim Jesus and portray Him to others.

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*[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group - though this week it would certainly be good to **try** and cover them all! It will be helpful to ensure that in this study you at least cover questions 2, 4 & 5. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]*

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1. **Read 1 Cor.12.1-14.** Before looking at a passage in any detail it's helpful to grasp the thrust of the passage as a whole: these verses introduce a new section in the letter (chapters 12-14).

Having read the passage how would you summarise its thrust or theme in a single sentence?

At which bits did you find yourself thinking, *'I wonder what that means'*?

2. Read 1 Cor.12.1-3. Some of what these Christians thought they knew about their experience of the Spirit derived from their previous pagan worldview. Paul is keen to correct that.

Instead of resorting to a plethora of 'dumb idols' we now rely on the one Saviour: what were the 'dumb idols' to which people today tend to turn?

'Jesus is Lord' is more than a creedal statement - it's a statement of a whole lifestyle: how does the Lordship of Jesus find expression in your life?

3. Read 1 Cor.12.4-6. Our life as the people of God is energized by the Spirit of God, and is directed to the proclamation of the Son of God: the Spirit of God orchestrates the whole 'symphony'.

What is the main point that Paul is making in these verses?

Why do you think he is highlighting this, and what lessons might we learn today from what he says?

4. **Read 1 Cor.12.7.** This is an important statement in Paul's teaching about the gifts of the Spirit, and provides a helpful summary of what he has just said.

What are the important truths underlined in in this verse, and what are their implications for ourselves?

5. **Read 1 Cor.12.8-10.** This is one of a number of such 'lists' in the NT: they are *illustrative* rather than exhaustive, and are to be interpreted in the light of the truths set out in v.7.

Why do you think Paul concentrates in this list largely on 'gifts' involving speech?

Read **Rom.12.1-8**: what is the point which Paul is making in these 'lists' of 'gifts' given to the Lord's people?

*(With many non-Christians present at the service on Sunday 2nd June, the message will not really touch on what is essentially an 'in-house' issue, namely the gifts which are sometimes called 'sign gifts', such as 'miraculous powers', 'prophecy' and 'tongues'. Be careful in the Community Groups to 'maintain the unity of the Spirit' when considering these 'sign gifts'! With the love set out in ch.13, respectfully recognize that some of you will be 'cessationist' in your theology [taking the view that miraculous gifts were a sign of apostolic authority and **ceased** with the apostles] while others*

will be 'continuist' [taking the view that these 'sign gifts' have **continued** to the present time]. That's a discussion for another occasion - and it's worth noting that both views have some very eminent and godly proponents! Try not to spend too much time on this - it's not the main point in what Paul is teaching and may distract you from the primary challenges of this passage.)

6. Read 1 Cor.12.11. Having illustrated the diversity of these gifts, Paul goes on to re-iterate the essential unity which is the hallmark of the Spirit's work (He always brings things *together*).

What are the truths which Paul underlines in this verse?

Why is it so important that our thinking is shaped by each a recognition of each of these truths?

7. Read 1 Cor.12.12-14. Paul explains the *diversity* of the gifts given by the Spirit by using the picture of believers being brought together by the Spirit to form thus the 'body' of Christ.

What are the spiritual gifts which you have been given?

According to what Paul writes here, why is it important that, in the power of the Spirit, we each exercise our gifts?