**The Church at Corinth**

**A Church Facing Inner Problems – #34**

**Diverse Gifts, Unity, Tongues, Works of the Spirit**

**1 Corinthians 12:4-11**

**1 Corinthians 12**

***4*** *There are different sorts of gifts, but the same Spirit;* ***5*** *there are different sorts of service, but the same Lord;* ***6*** *there are different sorts of work, but the same God, who produces all of them in everyone.* ***7*** *To each individual is given the manifestation of the Spirit for some good.* ***8*** *To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom; to another, the utterance of knowledge through the same Spirit;* ***9*** *to another, faith by the same Spirit, and to another, gifts of healing by that on Spirit;* ***10*** *to another, the working of mighty deeds; to another, prophecy; to another, discernment of spirits; to another, kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues.* ***11*** *But one and the same Spirit produces all these, bestowing them individually on each one as it wills.*

**How the Gifts Affected the Church?**

1. Paul recognizes the gifts of the Spirit, and now he emphases the diverse manifestations of the Spirit. The true manifestations of the gifts are tested by their diversity but this must be detrimental to the unity of the community.
2. There must have been confusion in Corinth that demanded of Paul to stress that “Spirit”is the power of God the Lord who unites the community. This unity is the reason for the gifts, which are received according to 1 Corinthians 2:9ff, serve the common good that is the whole life of the church.
3. Paul lists three main manifestations:

a. The ***charismata****,* “gifts,”

b. *The* ***diakoniai****,* “services,”

c. The ***energemata****,* “works” (vv. 4-6).

1. These three are the source of 9 other gifts: 1. speaking of wisdom, 2. speaking of knowledge, 3. faith, 4. healing, 4. miracles, 5. working, 6. prophecy, 7. discernment of spirits, 8. speaking in tongues, and 9. interpretation of such speech (vv. 8–10).
2. This list of spiritual gifts(12:4-10) is similar to other lists in Paul’s writing (Rom 12:6-8; cf. Eph 4:11). In this list of 1 Corinthians 12:4-10), the gift of tongues and their interpretation are mentioned again in 12:28-30).
3. The Greek text sometimes give the name of the person(s) endowed, and sometimes just the abilities or actions. It is difficult to render these accurately in English so the reader is forewarned about differences in modern translations of the lists. All are gifts of the Spirit freely endowed, but not all involve dramatic action or emotional experience. Three significant endowments of persons are mentioned: “apostles,” “prophets,” and “teachers.”

**Kinds of Tongues (1 Cor 12:10)**

1. “Kinds of tongues” (12:10) was a phenomenon in the early church. It was mentioned in Acts and now it is mentioned in Corinth but it is absent from the lists in Romans and Ephesians. This is a puzzle that is hard to understand. But the Same Spirit must be working in the whole church.
2. What was the exact problem at Corinth? We have to guess. The whole chapter of chapter 14 in 1 Corinthians is devoted to the treatment of the gift of tongues as one of the gifts of the Spirit.

1. Did some abuse this gift? There is obvious misunderstanding among those who received this gift. Paul’s words point to this direction that One and the Same Spirit works in all in spirit of the diversity. Later John Chrysostom says: “Even if the gift bestowed on you is less than the gift bestowed on someone else, the Giver is the same, and therefore you have equal honor with him. It is the same fountain from which you draw refreshment.” (Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians* 29.4.)

4. In recent decades we see “Charismatic Renewal” among various denominations and their emphasis is on speaking in tongues and other phenomena. These manifestations of The Holy Spirit have been debated by different persons (Eph 4:4).

**TEST STUDY**

**VERSE 4 –** *There are different sorts of gifts, but the same Spirit;*

Diverse (or *different*) is translated from the Greek noun ***diaireseis***. This occurs only here in the NT, and it is used relating to “different” gifts.” These gifts come from the one Spirit, but are given differently and are diverse in kind.

**Charismata / Spiritual Gifts**

*Charismata* is plural and refers to the gifts of the same “the same Spirit” which enables all Christians, Jewish and Gentile alike, to acknowledge the risen Christ as “Lord.” There is a striking similarity of ***charisma***to ***charis****,* “grace” in Romans 12:6. Both words are etymologically different but the whole work of the Spirit is “grace.” The word *charisma* is never used for a gift that one human being gives to another, but always used for a divine gift (Rom 11:29; 1 Cor 7:7; 12:28).

**Diakonia / Service**

**VERSE 5** – *there are different sorts of service, but the same Lord.*

“Service,” that is,***diakoniai***, is different from *“*spiritual*”* gifts. The ***diakonia*** is a “service” or “ministry” that a Christian is equipped to perform within the community. It is given by the one ***Kyrios***(Lord)*,* and here it is the Risen Christ who is acknowledged in the confession (12:3), for Christ continues his ***diakonia***, that is, his service, to the community and later to his Body the Church (1 Cor 12:12). In 1 Corinthians 3:5 a “servant” (***diakonos***)described a special minister like Apollos or Paul. In 1 Corinthians 16:15, ***diakonia*** will describe the ministry of Stephanas and his household. In 2 Corinthians 4:1; 5:18; 6:3 it used for Paul’s own ministry. Here it has a general meaning.

**Deacon**

The word appears in Philippians 1:1 and later in 1 Timothy 3:8, 12. By the year 110 and earlier in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, a “deacon” is a devoted servant (see *The* *Letters of Ephes.* 2.1; *Smyrn.* 8.1)

**Energema / Works**

**VERSE 6 –** *There are different sorts of work, but the same God, who produces all of them in everyone.*

***Energema***  referring to “works” occurs only here and in verse 10 in the NT. The use of “work” seems to indicate a different action from the use of “*diakoniai”*. Otherwise, we will not have two words (v.5). Work is something that one performs for the good of the community as do the other forms of *the “spiritual.”*  An example of such “*energemata”* is given in verse 10, “*the working of mighty deeds*.” Such “works” are given by“God,” meaning “the Father,” used often in the NT (e.g., 2 Cor 3:3; 5:18; 13:12; Rom 5:11). Please notice the expression“*the same God*,” which follows upon “*to the same Spirit”* (verse 4), and *the same Lord* (verse 5) for here we have the root of the doctrine of the Trinity and the three work as the one source of the diverse gifts.

**VERSE 7 –** *To each individual is given the manifestation of the Spirit for some good.* The diverse “*spiritual”* itemslisted in vv. 4-6 are summed up as “*the manifestation of the Spirit*,” and their purpose is expressed in accordance with what is advantageous. The emphasis is on “to each” and “for the good” of all in the community. It is not for “the good of the individual” for “each” denotes diversity and also the place of the individual in the community.

**Manifestation of the Spirit**

The Greek noun *phanerosis,* “manifestation,” is important, for the work of the Spirit is not only internal but has the external signs of the presence and activity of the Spirit within the community. The “manifestation” is not different from the “fruit” of the Spirit in (Gal 5:22). *Phanerosis* occurs also in 2 Corinthians 4:2, “manifestation of the truth,” and so the gift is manifested by each one but also to the whole community.

**VERSE 8 –** *To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom.*

The phrase *logos sophias,* “an utterance of wisdom,” would mean the ability to communicate the Christian truths to others in a wise way that leads to illumination.

**Words of Wisdom**

Here are some “uttereances of wisdom” by Isaac the Syrian (c. 630 – c. 700) (quoted in [Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev: The Incarnation of the Word and the deification of man according to St Isaac of Nineveh.](http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/11/1/16.aspx))

* “If you cannot be merciful, at least speak as though you are a sinner.  If you are not a peacemaker, at least do not be a troublemaker.  If you cannot be assiduous, at least in your thought be like a sluggard.  If you are not victorious, do not exalt yourself over the vanquished.  If you cannot close the mouth of a man who disparages his companion, at least refrain from joining him in this.”
* If zeal had been appropriate for putting humanity right, why did God the Word clothe Himself in the body in order to bring the world back to His Father using gentleness and humility?
* And why was He stretched out on the Cross for the sake of sinners, handing over His sacred body to suffering on behalf of the world?
* I myself say that God did all this for no other reason, except to make known to the world the love that He has, His aim being that we, as a result of our greater love arising from an awareness of this, might be captivated by His love when He provided the occasion of this manifestation of the kingdom of heaven’s mighty power – which consists in love – by means of the death of His Son.
* The Incarnation and the death on the Cross happened not to redeem us from sins, or for any other reason, but solely in order that the world might become aware of the love, which God has for His creation.
* Had all this astounding affair taken place solely for the purpose of forgiveness of sin, it would have been sufficient to redeem us by some other means.
* What objection would there have been if He had done what He did by means of an ordinary death?
* But He did not make His death at all an ordinary one – in order that you might realize the nature of this mystery.
* Rather, He tasted death in the cruel suffering of the Cross.
* What need was there for the outrage done to Him and the spitting?
* Just death would have been sufficient for our redemption – and in particular His death, without any of these other things which took place.
* What wisdom is God’s! And how filled with life!
* Now you can understand and realize why the coming of our Lord took place with all the events that followed it, even to the extent of His telling the purpose quite clearly out of His own holy mouth:

“To such an extent did God love the world that He gave His only-begotten Son” – referring to the Incarnation and the renewal He brought about.

* When the entire extent of creation had abandoned and forgotten God and had perfected themselves in every kind of wickedness … He came down to their abode and lived among them in their body just as one of them, and with a love exalted beyond knowledge or description by any created being, he begged them to turn back to Himself, showing them concerning the glorious establishment of the world to come, having intended before all worlds to introduce felicity such as this for creation.

**From Philemon**

“If punishment can heal our sins, God would have used it rather than sending his Son to reveal his love to heal us by his love from our love for sin.” - Abba Philemon.

**Knowledge and Wisdom**

**VERSE 8 (cont.) –** *To another, the utterance of knowledge through the same Spirit.* Knowledge, ***gnosis***, is different from wisdom, ***Sophia****,* for not all knowledge is wisdom.Wisdom has the unexpected plan of salvation that is not part of any system but is the hidden design of God (1 Cor 2:6-13), whereas knowledge may mean the elementary truths and teaching such as what Paul himself mentions that it is knowledge that “*an idol is nothing at all in this world*” (6:4).

In 1 Corinthians 13:2, knowledge or *gnosis* will reappear in a list with “prophecy” and “mysteries.” Knowledge is part of faith that can “move mountains,” and again in 1 Corinthians 14:6 knowledge is mentioned alongside “revelation” and “prophecy and instruction.” Paul sometimes speaks negatively of “*knowledge* *alone”* (8:1, 7, 10, 11; 13:8), but he also speaks positively of it (1:5; 2 Cor 2:14; 4:6; 6:6; 8:7; 10:5; 11:6). Knowledge without love or faith can be dangerous.

“*Give me a word of knowledge*” was a common request to the elders of the Desert in the 4th and the 5th centuries. Requests, and answers the elders would speak, might be like:

Q - What can I do to be saved from evil thoughts that invade my mind?

A - Ignore them for if you try to think about them you will be like a man who sees a mad person throw stones at whoever is passing by and instead of walking away, he stands facing this man waiting for the stones.”

Q - “I can’t control my mind from wandering thoughts, what can I do?

A - No human can control his mind, but it is like that birds may fly over your head, but you have the pose to stop them from making their nests on the top of your head.” - *Benedicta Ward,* [*The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers*](http://www.amazon.com/Wisdom-Desert-Fathers-Benedicta-Ward/dp/0728301091/ref%3Dsr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1382662951&sr=8-2&keywords=wisdom+of+the+desert+fathers)

**VERSE 9 –** *To another, faith by the same Spirit.*

Here the use of “faith” ***pistis***denotes a special kind of *spiritual gift* given only to some individuals. It cannot have the normal Pauline sense of “faith” response to the gospel (as in Rom 10:8, “*the word of faith that we preach*”; 10:9-10, 17). Paul does not distinguish levels of faith rather it is “*the faith to move mountains*.” (1 Cor 13:2; cf. Matt 17:20; 21:21)

**VERSE 9 (cont.) –** *“to another, gifts of healing by that one Spirit.*

The ***charismata***“gifts” of healing” (vv. 28, 30) are Christians following the example of Jesus who pray for healing (Acts 4:30). This gift was “working” in Acts 3:1-10; 5:15).

**Mighty Powers (Note: includes scripture list of miracles)**

**VERSE 10** – *To another, the working of mighty deeds.*

Literally “workings of powers,” sings of the Kingdom called also “miracles.” The word ***dynamis****,* “power, might,” especially in the plural (***dynameis***), is often used in the NT for the wondrous deeds or miracles of Jesus recounted in the Gospels (Mark 6:2; Matt 7:22; 11:20, 21, 23; 13:54, 58; Luke 10:13; 19:37); cf. Acts 2:22; 10:38), and also within the Christian community. (see 1 Thess 1:5; Gal 3:5; 2 Cor 12:12; Acts 19:11).

**Prophecy**

**VERSE 10** **(cont.)** – *To another, prophecy …*

The word “prophecy” does not mean telling only future events, but the effective teaching and the dynamic preaching of the gospel as a gift of the Spirit.” In Classical Greek writings ***propheteia*** *means* the “gift of interpretation the will of the god.” Lucian describes it:

“Prophecy gifted, from God’s mind takes its issue,

Sent by the Father to aid good men in the stress of the conflict;

Then it to God will return, by God’s own thunder­bolt smitten.”

- (*Alexander the False Prophet.* 40, 60; LSJ, 1539).

In the OT prophecy was considered a gift of the Spirit (Ezek 2:2-3), but also as something that was dying out in Israel (see Ps 74:9; Dan 3:38; 1 Macc 9:27). Now it is reappearing among Christians in the church as an utterance made for God. The OT sense is seen in Exodus 4:10-16. Moses, having been told by God to go to speak to the Hebrews in Egypt, protests that he is slow of speech and not eloquent enough. Moses is told to take his brother Aaron with him; “*you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and his mouth. He shall speak for you to the people; he shall be a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God*.” (Cf. Jer 1:9; 2 Sam 12:25)

But in the NT prophecy, no trance or ecstasy were reported as it sometimes used to happen in the OT (e.g., Num 11:25–29; 1 Sam 10:6, 10–11). Hence the Christian sense of the word “prophecy” has to be understood as a Spirit-inspired dynamic and effective preaching of the Scriptures and the gospel, without excluding telling what might happen in the future. Later, the Didache tells Christians to discern spirit:

 “*for every sin will be forgiven, but not this one*” (Matt 12:31). Yet not everyone who speaks with spirit is a prophet, unless he has the ways of the Lord. From their ways, then, the false prophet and the (real) prophet will be known. No prophet who orders a meal with spirit will eat of it; otherwise he is a false prophet. Every prophet who teaches the truth, if he does not do what he teaches, is a false prophet.”

However, discernment should not be limited to prophets, because there is no indication in the text this is a special gift given only to prophets.

 *- Didache (chapter 11:7-10),*

**Speaking in tongues**

**VERSE 10** **(cont.)** – *To another, kinds of tongues ….*

The phrase“kinds of tongues” or “kinds of language” occurs again only in verse 28.

Tongue in Greek is ***glossa***and it is the organ for “speech, language.” In Greek ***gene glosson***could mean different foreign languages spoken by human beings (***xeno-logia***), but, in “tongues,” means vocal utterances of unusual nature not understood by others, as it becomes clear in chapter 14. Sometimes Paul calls them simply ***glossai,***“tongues” (12:10, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:5, 6, 18, 22, 23, 39 often tongue has the verb“speak”, sometimes in the singular ***glossa****,* “tongue” (14:2, 4, 9, 13, 14, 19, 26, 27 (often with *speak*).

**The NT Speaking in Tongues**

1. Some commentators think that it was a reference to Isaiah 28:11, a verse that Paul quotes (1 Cor 14:21), “*By people speaking strange tongues and by lips of foreigners will I speak to this people*.” Similarly Isaiah 19:18, which also uses the words of speaking a foreign language. In five other passages of the LXX, speaking in foreign tongues occurs (Jer 9:4; Job 33:2; Ps 37:30; 39:4; 109:2), but all these “tongues” are uttering something: justice, truth, or lies, nothing unintelligible.
2. Speaking in tongues in the NT appears first in Acts (2:4-11; 10:45-46; 19:6). The Spirit on Pentecost made people “ to speak in *other* tongues” (2:4), which for most commentators means “*xeno-logia”,* “speaking in foreign tongues,” a miraculous phenomenon that suits the first Christian Pentecostal situation (recall the many nations listed in Acts 2:6–11). Luke describes speaking in tongues (10:45-46; 19:6) in a way similar to what Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. Apart from these Pauline and Lucan (writings of Paul and Luke) passages, the phenomenon is not known elsewhere in the NT.
3. Some interpreters understand “new tongues,” those mentioned in Mark’s Gospel (16:17), as the foreign tongues.

**Tongues and the Church at Corinth**

1. Today most NT scholars understand the Greek name in 1 Corinthians 12:30 as ***glossolalia***, which is found in standard Greek dictionaries (LSJ, Lampe, Sophocles, Bailly). In Classical Greek the noun is used by the fifth-century Procopius of Gaza (*Prov.* 10:31; PG 87.1321D), meaning “chatter.” But this classical word was not used anywhere in the letters of Paul.
2. J Dunn, in his book, *Jesus and the Spirit, (*243-44) thinks that Paul was referring to foreign tongues, and this means “angelic tongues,” not human. In 1 Corinthians 13:1, Paul uses “angelic tongues” but we are told in the whole Bible what is the language of the angels.
3. We have two possibilities; the first is that the tongues are not the normal utterances of normal way of speaking in intelligible speech. This would be something like “ecstatic utterance” (which was used in NEB). This is common in the life of some mystics and was even reported by Lady Margery Kempe (1373 – after 1438) who spoke in a kind of muttering that made her gain fame of being “mad.” But in the East, this kind of utterance is called “the cry of angels” that is understood not by our rational way of intelligible speech.

4. Second is the other meaning that the tongues are the miraculously given ability to speak a human language foreign to the speaker. This must not negate what seems to be what Paul has in mind in chapter 12 and chapter 14 where there is a kind of a tongue that is in some form of non-communicative utterance or incoherent babbling. Paul recognizes the phenomenon as a spiritual gift to individuals in the Christian community (12:10, 30), and as a manifestation of the Spirit (12:7, 11).

**Interpretation of tongues**

**VERSE 10 (cont.) -** *To another, the interpretation of tongues.*

This implies that what is spoken in tongues can be put into articulate speech. This might even be given to the speakers themselves.

**VERSE 11 –** *But one and the same Spirit produces all these, bestowing them individually on each one as it wills.*

“All these” summing up the work of the Spirit. What was said above about “God” (verse 6) is repeated about God’s Spirit, now said to be “one and the same,” “all these” gifts are not personal achievements but has one divine source: the Spirit, the Lord, God the Father.

**The work of the Holy Spirit in the Human Person**

Joseph Hazzaya (Born about 710-13 AD, Joseph the Seer, Syriac Church)

“The first sign of the effective working of the Spirit is when the love of God burns in the heart of a person like fire. From this, revulsion for, and complete renunciation of the world are born; at the same time, love of prayer and self-disciplined life, which is the source and educator of all virtues - are also born.

The second sign, through which you will feel that you have received the Spirit when you have believed and baptized, working in you, my brother, consists in true humility being born in your soul, which induces a person to consider himself dust and ashes, a worm and no man (Ps 22:6), notwithstanding the great and wonderful things done to him by the Spirit who dwells in him.

The third sign of the working of the Spirit within you consists in the kindness which represents within you the image of God, through which, when your thoughts extend to all people, tears flow from your eyes like fountains of water, as if all people were dwelling in your heart, and you affectionately embrace them and kiss them, your heart is kindled with the power of the working of the Spirit within you as with fire.

The fourth sign from which you will know that the Spirit is working within you consists in true love, which does not leave in your thought any remembrance apart from the remembrance of God alone, which is the spiritual key through which the inner door of the heart is opened.

The fifth sign of the working within you of the Spirit, consists in the illuminated vision of your mind, a vision which is seen in the firmament of your heart like the sapphire sky. It is this vision which receives the light of the Holy Trinity, and it is this sign that leads you to the vision of the material natures (that is, the physical world), from which you then rise further to the knowledge of intelligible natures (that is, the spiritual world) .... From this glorious and holy vision you will fall into a state of wonder at that extensive world, the benefits of which are ineffable. From this state of wonder you will derive a flow of spiritual speech (that is, the charisma of tongues), and a knowledge of both worlds (word of knowledge), of the one that has passed, and the one that shall pass; and you will gain a consciousness of the mysteries to come.

This will be accompanied by a holy scent and taste, the fair sounds of the spiritual intelligences, joy, jubilation, exultation, praise, glorification, songs, hymns and odes of magnification. The above are the signs by whose presence within you, you will realize that the Holy Spirit, which you received when you believed and baptized, is working with you. Watch when temptations attack you and in spite of its strength and power you refuse to surrender your heart to sin. If it is not the power of the Holy Spirit working in you, ask yourself, where this resistance to lust comes from. I say to you it is power of the Spirit of Holiness”

-- Charles Mingana, *Early Christian Mystics*, pp165-67.1936

***Pope’s Notes***

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