

---

# What about the Spirit's Work?

## 1 Corinthians 12<sup>19</sup>

*Russ Kennedy*

### Part One

(That) was power, but it was also a razor-edged weapon. The greatest test of all was to have power and yet refrain from using it. It was something few men could do. Sooner or later the mere fact that you could do something drew you to do it, as a precipice draws you to its edge, no matter how deep your sense of vertigo. *Murder in the Serpentine* Anne Perry

The same with spiritual power. It has its right place and its right uses. But it can be enticing and intoxicating drawing people into unexpected troubles and bondage.

You may face significant difficulty over the next three chapters of 1 Corinthians:

You may struggle with reading the text through our theological frameworks and lenses.

You may struggle with rejecting the plain meaning of the text because it has led people down through the ages to extreme practices.

You may struggle with understanding the text because you do not believe that our present age or our particular culture is filled with demonic influences or powers.

You may struggle because the text doesn't actually say what you thought it did, whether you believe or deny the ongoing manifestations of the Spirit.

You will want answers to your questions and concerns before the expositions are completed.

But this is the text before us...

As always when faced with difficult text we expound them and let the exposition and application land where it may.

As always, we will not allow the misuse of and excesses to cause us to ride the pendulum in the opposite direction.

As always, there will be some differences of opinion, even among the elders on some issues. That is fine. I will be as honest with the text as I know how.

Finally, through these texts I am going to not use the word, "tongue". That is a transliteration of the word (and not even a good one). I will use the common understood meaning of the word in that day which in English is, *language*.

---

<sup>19</sup> Unless otherwise designated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

## The Spirit's Primary Work (v. 1-3)

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning spiritual (gifts), brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. <sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. <sup>3</sup> Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

### *A New Subject (v. 1)*

"Now concerning" is Paul's phrase to introduce a new subject. He has also used it to transition to subjects they have written about. Given that they have asked him about a number of subjects, it makes sense that he now turns to another topic they have written about.

The subject is spirituality. The word here can mean spiritual things or spiritual people. From the discussion itself, the question is not just about "spiritual gifts". The topic is really focused on what are the marks of being spiritual. Given their pagan backgrounds, some were focused on the supernatural manifestations of the Spirit as the mark of being a Christian or of being a more spiritual person.

### *A Past Reminder (v. 2)*

Pagan worship had led them astray before mute idols. The Christians in Corinth had been converted out of a kind of pagan life and worship. They were involved in the Greek mystery religions and had supernatural spiritual experiences. They were spoken to directly, moved into ecstasies, had visions, made prophecies and spoke in unintelligible babble. They were "moved" or "directed" to certain decisions and deeds and often saw the effects of spiritual powers, normally in the forms of curses and blessings. These were considered normal and necessary as a part of their life. This is similar to the pagan practices in many false religions today. Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, new age mysticism, voodooism and others all expect that the spiritual person will have spiritually supernatural experiences. Those religions without it had weaker deities. People without it were somehow spiritual deficient. Those who attained it had a special relation and communion with the gods. I have not chosen this language to create a false similarity to the extremes of the Charismatics. This is language drawn directly from those who are promoters or practitioners of these pagan worships.

As he has before, Paul points to the problem with idols. They themselves are impotent, dumb, speechless. However there are evil spiritual forces associated with them who can and do interact powerfully with the worshippers to cause the experiences they were having. Some of these spiritual forces were mediated by drugs, alcohol, hypnotic trances and mind opening chants. Paul is giving us the Divine interpretation of the experiences of the pagans. They were being moved by spiritually powerful forces while they sang, danced, bowed, groveled, babbled in front of idols of wood, stone and gold made by human hands.

### ***A Basic Truth (v. 3)***

The Spirit's primary work is to focus on the Lordship of Christ. His work in us and through us is to magnify Christ and to mature us in Christ. Therefore, the universal mark of a spiritual person, that is, the indwelling of the Spirit, is the confession of Jesus as Lord. All who are true believers have this unmistakable evidence.

Obviously Paul does not mean that he cannot even say the words 'Jesus is Lord' without the Spirit. Paul is talking about publicly confessing the desire and the doing of submitting to the authority of Christ. It may involve the initial confession of faith through water baptism, but the sense is of acknowledging Christ before a hostile world. Without the Spirit in the face of a carnal and corrupt culture, who could maintain the obedience of a Christian confession without the Spirit?

David Prior correctly points out, "To be truly 'spiritual' drives a person neither to ecstasy nor to individualism nor to other-worldliness, but into the life of the local church as an expression of his personal commitment to Jesus as Lord and to his body here on earth. It is there that the implications of what it is to be 'spiritual', men and women of the Spirit, will be worked out." (Prior, p. 194)

Paul's understanding of true spirituality centers on the Holy Spirit constantly seeking to glorify Christ as Lord. That idea structures and permeates these three chapters. Chapter 12 focuses on the church as the body of Jesus Christ. Chapter 13 unfolds the essential character of Jesus Christ. Chapter 14 uses speaking in languages and prophecy to show how the manifestations of the Spirit exercised under the Lordship of Jesus Christ serves to build up His body, the church. When the church begins to function Biblically and effectively, Jesus is seen to be Lord over all. (Adapted from Prior, p.194)

Over against both the Corinthians of Paul's day and the Charismatics of our day, the mark of being born again is not any supernatural manifestation of the Spirit. Rather it is the supernatural confession of the Lordship of Jesus through the Spirit.

This is the call and invitation in Biblical gospel evangelism. This is the mark of the new birth. This is the evidence of conversion. The person, before a loving church and a hostile world is willing to publicly confess that Jesus is Lord. The person is willing to obey the Lord. It is impossible to call Jesus Lord when you will not obey what the Lord commands. So this confession of Christ's Lordship is not only in our words but also in our deeds. This is why everyone who is converted in the New Testament obeys the Lord in baptism as quickly as possible.

### **The Ministry's Empowering Diversity (v. 4-11)**

<sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup> and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup> and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. <sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup> For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to

another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

### ***Its Various Categories (v. 4-6)***

There are three main categories here. But there is only one Spirit. The Holy Spirit is assigning these groups, clusters, categories of ministries to people in the church.

There are Spirit enabled gifts or graces. These are the grace enabled abilities given to each Christian.

There are Spirit enabled services or ministries. These are the "slave" work, the serving work, of the church. Many people are just enabled to do the work that needs to be done.

There are Spirit enabled activities or working. These are where the Spirit overflows and spills over in some sacrificial and possibly supernatural deed of love for someone or the church.

But there is One God, who is Trinity involved in all . There is the same Spirit, the same Lord and the same God, the Father. God is at work in His people to enable and empower all that He is doing through people.

### ***Its Universal Distribution (v. 7)***

Each one and everyone who is a Christian has some manifestation of the Spirit's work in their lives. There is some way in which the Trinity is enabling and empowering you to serve in the church. Each one has the Spirit. All have the Spirit. Therefore the Spirit is working through you with His power to serve the church. Each one of you have some ability by the Spirit to serve.

All of the manifestations are for the common good. Your Spirit assigned gift, ministry, activity is *not for you, but for others*. This is critical. This is where so many have gone wrong even in Corinth. Your manifestation of the Spirit was not given to you for yourself.

This means you must be served by others or you will not become all that God has designed you to become. Disconnecting from others means you are disconnected from the Spirit's ministry *to you*.

This means you must use it to serve others or you are being selfish and hoarding the Spirit's presence and power in your own life.

### ***Its Sample Listing (v. 8-10)***

Paul gives an illustrative list, a sample list of the Spirit's manifestations in the life of the church through His people. This illustrative list is drawn from the work of the Spirit in the church at Corinth. It is a mistake to take these as normative for all churches nor as an exhaustive list. In other writings, Paul gives different, but overlapping lists of manifestations. Peter says all the works of the Spirit boil down to two categories: speaking and serving.

The key, as Gordon Fee (591) has suggested, is to note the divisions in the list marked by Paul's use of a different word meaning "another":

To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom,  
and to another (all) the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit.

To another (heter) faith by the same Spirit,  
to another (all) gifts of healing by the one Spirit,  
to another (all) the working of miracles,  
to another (all) prophecy,  
to another (all) the discernment of spirits,

to another (heter) various kinds of languages,  
to another (all) the interpretation of languages.

Now let's look at each one of these being mindful of Paul's emphasis and organization.

Speaking wisdom	This is the Spirit enabled ability to receive and express God's wisdom in life's situations. It is the special enablement of James 1.
Speaking knowledge	This is the Spirit enabled ability to understand and express the knowledge gleaned from the Scriptures. There is no indication here of some "word" from God "about others."
Faith	This is the Spirit enabled ability to believe and obey God even in the most difficult circumstances. This is not the ability to believe God so that we get things or create things; it is the ability to believe God so that we endure.
Receiving healings	This is the receiving of healing by the Holy Spirit. It should be translated "gifts (plural) of healings (plural)". So, the Spirit empowers supernatural healing and gives such to people. There is no indication <i>here</i> of the Spirit enabling <i>healers</i> . Jesus and the Apostles were the primary but not exclusive instruments by which the Spirit gave people healings.
Working miracles	This is the Spirit enabling people to do supernatural things. This may include exorcism, but includes anytime the Spirit empowers a supernatural deed.
Prophecy	This is the Spirit enabled ability to proclaim the words of God to the people of God and to the world. It included divine revelation and future things until the Bible was completed. It was <i>always</i> Spirit-enabled preaching and still is.
Distinguishing Spirits	This is one of the most difficult to know what it was. This may be (1) the ability know when an evil spirit is involved in something; (2) the ability to discern the inward thoughts and motivations of

people; or (3) the receiving of a discerning spirit for the good of the church.

Speaking Languages	Lan-	This is the Spirit enabled ability to speak a language often unknown to the speaker. Almost all uses of this word in Hebrew and Greek refer to a human (and possibly angelic) speech. The two times it is not we will cover in 1 Corinthians 14.
Interpreting Languages		This is the Spirit enabled ability to interpret from one language to another. This may be spontaneous, but appears only here and in 1 Corinthians 14 where it appears to be self-aware and intentional. This is <i>not</i> the ability to read meaning into gibberish.

### ***Its Sovereign Assignment (v. 11)***

<sup>11</sup> All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Every one of these gifts, ministries and workings are all empowered by the Spirit. They may enhance a natural ability. They may empower an acquired skill. They may manifest themselves in one situation and not another. When they are genuine and authenticate, they will have all the marks of the Spirit's character in them. The greatest mark of the Spirit's character, virtue and power is His eager gladness to spotlight the greatness and glories of Jesus. All manifestations which focus on the instrument, the person or even worse, on the manifestation itself, are at best, the products of flesh faking the real. Or at the worst, they are the manifestations of evil spirits imitating the Holy Spirit's power and thus deceiving and enslaving them.

Paul intends to stress the diversity in God's church and to maintain the focus of the whole chapter on God's sovereign action in his church. There are four key verbs in the text which illustrate this sovereignty: verse 11, God 'apportioned/ assigned'; verse 18, 'God arranged'; verse 24, 'God composed'; verse 28, 'God appointed'. From beginning to end, from the smallest detail to the broad scope of church life, God is in control.

It is God who wills, assigns, apportions and then enables the manifestations of the Spirit. There is no evidence here of seeking, asking, praying for, pursuing, appropriating a gift for yourself. Jesus is Lord. The Spirit is sovereign. You are who you are in Christ. You have the manifestations of Spirit according to God's will.

The possession of any gift is therefore not a matter of individual merit or worthiness but of the sheer free grace of God. The implication for the spiritually ambitious Corinthians should be clear: There is no ground for boasting about being "spiritual," no matter what gifts one may possess. All the manifestations of the Spirit are to serve God's purpose for the common benefit of the community. (Hayes, p. )

## Part Two

### **The Body's Illuminating Analogy (v. 12-26)**

In the Greco-Roman culture, the analogy of the body was used by politicians and the cultural elites to keep people in their place. The lesser parts of the body must submit to the head, the higher part of the body. Everyone must keep their place in society. Society has ordained your place and you must keep to it. Paul turns this analogy on its... head.

Paul uses the analogy to illustrate the diversity in the body (vv. 14–20) and the interdependence among the members (vv. 21–26). His aim in the analogy is not to keep subordinates in their places. Rather he is pressing for the more “privileged members of the community to respect and value the contributions of those members who appear to be their inferiors, both in social status and in spiritual potency.” (Hayes, p. )

### ***The Body's Oneness (v. 12-13)***

The body of Christ is one in its being.

<sup>12</sup> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

The physical body is one body. It has many members or parts. The body is the sum of its parts. The parts of the body are connected to the body. All the members though, make up the body. And the body is essentially one. A person does not have two bodies. Even Siamese twins are two people who share body parts.

Paul is emphasizing the oneness of the body. But this oneness is spiritual. It is because of the Spirit. Each believer was placed into the body through the work of the Spirit. The word translated “baptism” here simply means “to place into”. So at our conversion, not only does the Spirit come into our souls and thus makes us alive, but He also places us into the body of Christ. So our oneness is created and sustained by the Spirit. He makes us alive at regeneration. He places us into the body of Christ, spiritually.

Now, there is a true spiritual reality behind this analogy. Remember, I believe the Bible teaches us that all of these physical realities were created as reflections of the greater, spiritual realities. Paul is not just using the body to explain something. He is employing what God made in the physical world in order to show us the greater, more magnificent reality in the spiritual realm. So, what Paul says here is a reality. We are one in Christ because the Spirit has placed us into His body.

Let me emphasize several points where people go wrong with this verse and idea.

### **The baptism here is not referring to water baptism.**

Water baptism is meant as a picture of spiritual realities. It does not *cause* them. You are not placed into Jesus' body when you go through water baptism. This is the problem with transliterating a Greek word instead of translating it. So when you see the word "baptism" it is best to rephrase the sentence with some form of being "placed into".

### **The baptism by the Spirit and the baptism of the Spirit are both the same thing.**

It is an act at our conversion where we are placed into the body of Christ. The difference in usage is *author* not *reality*. There are times when the Spirit manifests Himself in or through a believer in unusual and powerful ways. We have seen this in the earlier part of this chapter. But as far as I can see, these supernatural manifestations of the Spirit are not called "the baptism of Spirit." Paul has said that the universal mark of the presence of the Spirit in a person's life is the confession in word and deed that Jesus is Lord.

### **The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was a one time, not repeated event.**

It was the fulfillment of the promise to send the Spirit. He sent on all the believers but the Apostles were enabled to proclaim and were heard in many languages. We live in the downstream flow of that outpouring from Christ. The river of the Spirit came at Pentecost and now we drink from Him, we take Him in at our conversion.

### **This oneness is meant to minimize the cultural distinctions.**

All over the world, Christians are simply Christians. Paul labors all through the New Testament to take the old, cultural, fleshly, national and ethnic divisions and break them down. The reason is because of our oneness in the Spirit and our heavenly citizenship. Therefore, while national, cultural and ethnic realities exist, NEVER is the church to highlight them, accentuate them nor to baptize them as Christians. The New Testament church was multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-national. This created huge divisions within the church. Paul NEVER says, create a church which serves only or primarily your "group". No, Christians are to gather together without these distinctions. Jews and Gentiles, Romans and barbarians, black and white and Hispanic, Russian, Chinese and American, English, Spanish, ASL - these are all to be MINIMIZED except where essential to communication and even then, Paul expects churches to function in the common language and to translate so that all may profit.

### **There is a celebrated diversity, just not the one we think.**

The celebrated diversity is that of the manifestations of the Spirit, not the diversity of cultures. Paul is making this point. The church at Corinth was trying to make everyone have certain manifestations of the Spirit. They were emphasizing and even dividing along unbiblical lines. Therefore, they were trying to create a false



sameness while highlighting the wrong diversity. Paul is exactly reversing this. Highlight the diversity of the manifestations of the Spirit and minimize the human, fleshly, worldly divisions.

David Prior writes, "It is not a question of one special experience to be imposed upon all; but it is a reality to be experienced, and that experience can be continuous and daily. This expectant openness to experience the Spirit more and more on the part of every Christian will unite the body in eager dependence upon Jesus." (Prior, p.212)

The work of the Spirit is to make us one. We do not create unity. We maintain the unity the Spirit has created. We can break or violate that unity. But in that unity the Lord of the church demands that there be a deep welcome and harmony even in our differences.

### ***The Body's Necessary Diversity***

The unity of the body holds together its necessary diversity.

<sup>14</sup> For the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? <sup>18</sup> But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup> If all were a single member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

A body cannot function if all it has is one member or if all its members have the same function. The functions here are the manifestations of the Spirit. So the body as a whole and any gathered body have many different members and therefore, many different Spirit enabled functions. Using a bit of satire, Paul makes several points.

### **Do not use the gift you don't to disconnect from the body.**

Just because you do not have a particular gift does not mean you not part of the Body. If you have a gift, regardless of what it is, you are a part of the Body. So you cannot say, "Because I don't speak in a language, or can't teach or don't prophesy, therefore I am not a part of the Body." No gift functions like this. If you have the Spirit and make the confession of the Lordship of Christ, then you are a hand, an eye, a toe, a leg – you are something.

### **All who are saved are a part of the Body regardless if they deny it.**

This is interesting in verse 16. Your wrong belief or wrong statement about what your function in the Body *does not sever you from the Body does not sever you from the Body*. If you do not have the function you want or like you cannot say, "Well, since I can't do what I like or want, then I will not be a member of the Body." Sorry. That doesn't work.

## **Do not envy or desire to be another part of the Body.**

This is very difficult for many when certain gifts and manifestations are elevated above others. This is not to say there is no hierarchy of importance in gifts. Otherwise the next paragraph makes no sense. Rather, you have been given your gifts, abilities and possibly, manifestations by the Spirit. You don't get to choose them. Nor do you choose them for someone else. It is sinful and useless to desire or crave another gift than the one or ones you have.

## **Submit to the Lord's assignment of your spiritual abilities.**

Here is a bit of a warning. The mark of a true Christian is a word and deed confession of Jesus as Lord. This means obeying the Lord in what He commands. This includes first steps and all the long journey. It also means submitting our desires to His plan, purposes and providences. You must gladly submit to Jesus' choices of what your gifts, service and spiritual manifestations are. How can you say "Jesus is Lord over my life?" and then seek to deny the abilities He gave and crave others. I contend that most Christians do not struggle so much with believing Jesus. But they struggle mightily to bowing to Jesus. God has arranged the members of the body functionally exactly as He chose. You have a problem with that?...

One writer challenges to think through this more carefully with these words:

Rather than build up community out of diversity, we often tend to let each subgroup form its own unit and grow in isolation from other natural groupings. The community which is alive to the Spirit is committed, by Scripture, to the costly struggle of living out the reconciliation of all men to one another and to God, by uniting black and white, intellectual and action-oriented businessman, new believer and mature disciple, Jew and Gentile, young and old, male and female, single and married. (Prior, p. 214)

Let us then relish what God has done, even in our own gathered church. All of you who are believers have a function in this ministry. Do you use it?

## ***The Body's Vital Interdependence***

Each member of the Body is to recognize the necessity of the other members.

<sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, <sup>24</sup> which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Paul is turning the normal use of the body analogy on its head here. All members of the Body must recognize the necessity and interdependence of all the parts of the

Body. The “higher” parts of the Body, the “stronger” parts of the Body are not to look down on what is considered to be “lesser” or “weaker”. So those with public ministry, speaking gifts, those with visible, powerful manifestations of the Spirit are NOT to look down on the servants, the givers, the merciful.

We need to care for and support the members of the Body who are serving in the less visible ministries. They need to be encouraged, recognized and appreciated. They are vital to the functioning of this church as well as the Body of Christ in the world. I think of the ladies who serve in the office, hospitality team, campus teams that do setup, mow, clear snow, weed the gardens, clean the building. I think of people who serve in the Café, nurseries and media support. These servants are essential to the functioning of this gathered body. And more of you are needed. If you love to just serve and get things done, then do so! We need you. We want you. We thank God for each and every one of you.

The point then is not to divide into cliques that look down on other ministries or compete for resources. There should be no pedestal gifts nor pedestal people. Yes, there is Biblical specialization in ministry – this is the whole point of spiritual gifts. But we must not create divisions around those specializations.

Verse 26 describes a reality, not gives us a command. When you hit your thumb with a hammer, your thumb is hurt. But your whole body hurts. This is true, not just in our own church, but all across the Body of Christ. Wherever members of the Body are hurting, we are affected. We *are* affected. Not that we *should be* affected. We are. It may well be that some of our struggles come because of the pain of other Christians in the world today. And the same when one member or one portion of the Body of Christ is honored or blessed, we are all blessed. So our friends all across the world pray for and rejoice in our blessings because they are blessed with us.

## **The Lord's Appointing Sovereignty (v. 27-30)**

Finally, a Biblical theology of the work and manifestations of the Spirit recognizes both spiritual hierarchy and specialization.

<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. <sup>28</sup> And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of [languages] tongues. <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup> But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

This does not deny personal and ministry equality. Equality does not depend on function or roles. God the Father, Son and Spirit are all equal. But each one have different functions and roles in the Trinity. So, there is equality and functions and roles and headship in the home. And there is equality and functions and roles and leadership in the church.

There does seem to be some ordering of appointments in the church. Paul places Apostles first, prophets second and teachers third. These may be ranking according to authority. Apostles had authority over all the churches. The prophets were preaching and proclaiming God's Word. The teachers were instructing in God's Word. These gifted people were given to the church to edify, equip and enable people to carry out their Ministries (Ephesians 3-4).

After the first three, then there are all the rest. This is functioning to overturn the Corinthians ranking which had placed the supernatural manifestations of the Spirit first. Paul is placing the Word oriented manifestations of the Spirit first. The rest of the gifts have their place as the Spirit wills. This ranking is God's appointment.

So whatever we may think of the gifts, working and manifestations of the Spirit, we are to prize the "higher" gifts; that is, the Word oriented works of the Spirit. These are the gifts that we are to desire to see the Spirit doing. Yes, all the gifts are important in their own right. But without the preaching and teaching of the Word the Apostles gave us in the Scriptures, the church will not and cannot live.

But something was missing in the church at Corinth. Something, higher, better than even the manifestations of the Spirit. We will see that too...

---

## Reflect and Respond

### Part One

From this text I have several important convictions.

It is my firm conviction that many of the errors in belief, behavior and worship at Corinth are the same errors we see in modern Charismaticism.

It is my firm conviction that we must not read these texts in reaction to the excesses. We must accept them as they are wherever that actually leads us.

It is my conviction we should stop debating the extreme Charismatics on the gifts of the Spirit. They are apostates because they deny the Trinity. When I meet someone who is a part of the Pentecostal, Charismatic leadership, my first question is "What do you believe about the Trinity?" Anyone who knowingly embraces modalism is not a Christian. Anyone who denies the Trinity and is manifesting supernatural powers is doing so through evil spirits.

We have also substituted our own marks of a spiritual person. We take the common disciplines of the Christian life and turn them into the marks of the uncommon Christian life. We are less concerned about the manifestations of the Spirit's power. We have huge concerns about manifestations of a person's knowledge. Do they know the right things? Do they know things the right way? People are elevated and made different and distinct. We must be very

Careful. Spiritual people are those who have the Spirit. Those who have the Spirit confess the Lordship of Christ in words and deeds.

The Spirit manifests Himself in ways that focus on Christ. He is doing the work through us. But Christ is getting the glory.

The manifestations of the Spirit are in gifts, powers and works or doing. The Spirit is at work in the old creation as the transforming power of the new creation. So His power brings dead sinners to life, strength to the inner man and enablement in ministry. He also brings the renovating power of the new creation into the old as a foretaste of the future things. So the Spirit may heal, overcome language barriers and overcome the normal course of nature with supernatural powers and miracles. But these are foretastes of future realities' not the arrival of those realities now. And their manifestations are totally up to the will and purpose of God to distribute as He wills.

Let us stay true to the Word, true to God's will and submissive to the Lordship of Christ. Then, we will have seen the true shared work of the Spirit among all the Lord's people.

## **Part Two**

Let us support and strengthen the serving hands...

May the Holy Spirit grant you His enabling grace and power for all kinds of ministry...

Understand and accept that we need one another. We need each other's gifts, abilities and manifestations of the Spirit...

May all we do be done in the better way...