

The Visibility of the Spirit | 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Verse 1—

Now concerning spiritual gifts. Paul was discussing conduct in the Church, and now he addresses spiritual issues. Notice *gifts* in italics, indicating it was inserted for clarification in the English. Literally, **Now concerning spirituals** or *spiritual things*.

I would not have you ignorant. We have discussed this before. Paul calls people into knowledge when he makes these statements. He uses the word *agnoeo*, from which we get our word *agnostic*. (See also Romans 1:13; 2:4; 6:3; 7:1; 10:3; 11:25; 1 Corinthians 10:1; 12:1; 2 Corinthians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13.)

Verse 2—

Ye know that ye were Gentiles. Notice the second person plural pronouns. The word **Gentiles** must always be looked at in its context and must always be interpreted. The word in Greek is *ethnos*, which means *nations*. When the meaning is specifically a non-Jew, the word used is *uncircumcision*. I believe Paul is speaking to Jews. Those who were **carried away**. The Jewish nation of Israel/Judah was **carried away** into captivity in 702 B.C. by the Assyrians, and in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians (Psalm 137¹). The Jews were **carried away** and dispersed among the *ethnos*, **unto these dumb idols**, dumb, meaning idols that cannot speak. In their dispersion, **even as ye were led**, these Jews, who had come from among the nations, had been led astray by the worship of idols (see 1 Thessalonians 1:9). Therefore, the context of this passage is Paul speaking to Jews (The primary group of people in the Corinthian Church).

Verse 3—

Wherefore, or *on account of* those in the Church, those Jews who had turned from idols to belief in Christ, could not say anything bad about Christ, because only by the **Holy Ghost** can a **man say that Jesus is Lord**. When a person is in **the Spirit**, he cannot fail to recognize Jesus for who he is. He is both Lord of the dead and of the living (Romans 14:9). Paul is showing a comparison here between those who followed idols and those who called Jesus Lord. Those who say that **Jesus is Lord** are able to have the *manifestation of the Spirit*, which we will see in verse 7.

Verse 4—

The word **gifts** is used here, and there are **diversities** (differences) of these **gifts** in the Corinthian Church. The word **gifts** is the Greek word *charisma*. We get the word charismatic. Even though there are **diversities of gifts**, they all come from **the same Spirit**, and will, therefore, be given consistently.

Verse 5—

And there are differences of administrations. The word differences is the same Greek word as *diversities*. **Administrations** is translated from the Greek word *diakonia*, which is from the root word *servant* (*diakonos*). There are different *ministries* or *ways of serving*. **But the same Lord.**

Verse 6—

And there are diversities of operations (*energeo*), that is *workings*. People within the Church are not the same; they have different *energeo*. **But the same God which worketh** (same Greek word, *energeo*) **all in all**. The point in these three verses: The Church in Corinth is made up of all kinds of different people, but they all serve the same God. All the workings in the church come from God. Notice also that Paul may be alluding to the Trinity; Spirit, Lord, God.

Verse 7—

But the manifestation of the Spirit. The word manifestation means something that is visible. How are these *gifts, administrations, and operations* seen within the Church? They are manifested by the Spirit. These things above are a **manifestation of the Spirit**. A person doesn't make these things happen; they are made visible by the Spirit, and they are **given** (passive) by the Spirit **to every man to profit withal**. In other words, these manifestations of the Spirit are not for personal gain. They are to profit the entire Church.

Verse. 8-10—

¹ The latter part of Psalm 137 is a reference is to Isa. 13:16–18, which belongs to a Dispensation of Law and Judgment, and is not to be interpreted of the present Dispensation of Grace.¹

For to one is given. There are nine manifestations listed by the Apostle Paul: 1) **word of wisdom**; 2) **word of knowledge**; 3) **faith**; 4) **gifts of healing**; 5) **working of miracles**; 6) **prophecy**; 7) **discerning spirits**; 8) **kinds of tongues**; 9) **interpretation of tongues**. Notice that no one person in the Corinthian Church has all of these manifestations of the Spirit.

Verse 11—

Dividing to every man severally as he wills. It is impossible to pray for a certain manifestation of the Spirit, although Paul told the Church in verse 31 that it was okay to desire the best gifts. These manifestations are given by the Spirit **as he wills**. Often, Charismatic congregations will pray for certain gifts or try and force themselves to have a certain gift. That was obviously never given as an instruction by Paul.

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

Verse 12—

Remember, from chapter 11; there were divisions in the Church of Corinth. They had forgotten they were one body, the body of Christ. In the previous verses, 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**. 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.

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, then 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.

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 a 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!