

CORINTHIANS - The MORE EXCELLENT WAY

STUDY 14

Manifestations, Miracles & Ministry

But one and the same Spirit works all these things,
distributing to each one individually just AS HE WILLS.

1 COR.12:11

Study 14a: The MESSAGE of the SPIRIT (12:1-6)

12:1-3 Note the emphasis of the Spirit, and therefore of the gifts (John 14:26; 15:26,27; 16:8,9,14,15)

How do they speak of Christ? Do they blaspheme, or do they worship him? If they openly and sincerely recognize Jesus as the Supreme Lord, then they are under the influence of the Holy Ghost ... [Hodge 238]

The principle error which misled the Corinthians and produced their spiritual ignorance (xii. 1) on this subject, seems to have consisted in this: they imagined that the more the influence of the Divine Spirit deprived a man of his self-consciousness and threw him into an ecstasy, the more powerful was that influence and the more sublime the state to which it raised the man; whereas the more the inspired person retained his self-possession, the less did his inspiration partake of a Divine character. From this point of view, the teacher was far beneath the prophet, and the prophet beneath him who spoke in tongues. Their rule was: the more (*Spirit*), the less (*intelligence*). This judgment accorded with Greek and even Jewish prejudices ... Plato said in the *Phaedrus*: "It is by madness (the exaltation due to inspiration) that the greatest of blessings come to us;" and in the *Timaeus* he says: "No one in possession of his understanding has reached Divine and true exaltation." ... How was it possible to set about the disciplining of such forces, which, from their very origin, a Divine impulse, seemed to escape from the control of the intellectual judgment and to defy all rule? The Pythia obeys only the god who subjects her to his will; the inspired one is above all remark and admonition: The Spirit impels me; what answer can be made to that? [Godet 602-3]

The characteristic of these *Gentiles* is that they are *carried away* to idols. The verb is often used of leading away a prisoner or condemned person (e.g. Mk. xiv.44, xv.16). The heathen are pictured, not as men freely following the gods their intellects have fully approved, but as under constraint, as helpless, as men who

**"Their rule was: the
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(*intelligence*)."**

— Godet

know no better ... Paul lays down his first point that the genuinely spiritual man is to be known by his utterances. [Morris 167]

12:4-6 Here a hint of how the church came to its Trinitarian faith (2Cor.13:14)

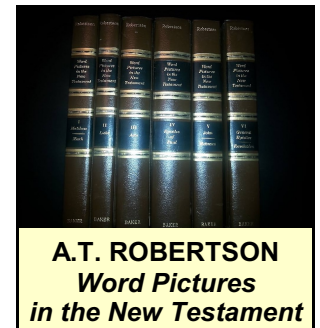
Lord, as usually in Paul, refers to Christ. This passage reveals something of the high place Paul assigns to Him, for He is mentioned between the Holy Spirit and God the Father. Paul does not formally enunciate the doctrine of the Trinity, but passages like this are distinctly Trinitarian in character. [Morris 169]

Study 14b: The SOVEREIGNTY of the SPIRIT (12:7-11)

12:7 Why does the Spirit give His various manifestations? (cf.Rom.1:26,27)

Manifestation [*phanerosis*]. Late word, in papyri, in NT only here and 2 Cor. 4:2, from *phaneroo*, to make manifest (*phaneros*). [A.T. Robertson Vol.4 p.169]

They are not designed exclusively or mainly for the benefit, much less for the gratification of their recipients; but for the good of the church. Just as the power of vision is not for the benefit of the eye, but for the man. When, therefore, the gifts of God, natural or supernatural, are perverted as means of self-exaltation or aggrandizement, it is a sin against their giver as well as against those for whose benefit they were intended. [Hodge 243]



A.T. ROBERTSON
Word Pictures
in the New Testament

12:8-10 How many gifts does Paul list, and can we detect significance in the order? (cf.v.28)

Nine forms of spiritual 'manifestation' are enumerated, probably in descending order of value ... [Bruce 119]

[*logos sophias*] Wisdom is intelligence, then practical action in accord with it. Here it is speech full of God's wisdom (2:7) under the impulse of the Spirit of God. This gift is placed first (revelation by the Spirit) ... [*logos gnoseos*] This gift is insight (illumination) according to (*kata*) the same Spirit. [A.T. Robertson 169]

If we start from the meaning of the two substantives, as it seems to follow from the form of the two Greek terminations ... we shall rather see in *gnosis* a notion of effort, investigation, discovery (comp. xiii. 2, where this term is connected with the idea of *knowing all mysteries*), and in *sophia*, on the contrary, the idea of a calm possession of truth already acquired, as well as of its practical applications. Gnosis makes the teacher; wisdom, the preacher and pastor. When corrupted, the former becomes gnosticism, the speculation of the intellectualist; the latter, dead orthodoxy. We see clearly from the passage xiii. 2 that the apostle distinguishes between faith in general and faith as a particular gift. As such, it is the possession of salvation taking the character of assurance in God, of heroic, daring, resolutely attacking and surmounting all the obstacles which are opposed to the work of God

in a given situation. "Father, I know that Thou hearest me always!" Such is the cry of this faith which removes mountains, and of which the history of the Church affords so many examples; witness a Francke, a Wilberforce, a George Muller, and so many others. It is to this gift the saying of Jesus, Matt. xvii. 20,21 refers. [Godet 623,625]

12:11 A great verse for anti-Trinitarians, but here serving another purpose – the humbling of the proud and the exalting of the lowly

The deliberate will ..., here ascribed to the Holy Spirit, seems to me to imply His personality, as the act of giving supposes His Divinity. The words: *to every man as He will*, are undoubtedly intended to sweep away from the more gifted of the Corinthians, every feeling of self-merit, and, from the less favoured, every tendency to discontentment. [Godet 634]

the god's control is vividly described by Virgil); at a humbler level the fortune-telling slave-girl of Ac.16.16 was dominated by the same kind of 'pythonic' spirit. Paul does not suggest that any prophecy or glossolalia at Corinth proceeded from such a source; he simply reminds his readers that there are 'inspired' utterances other than those produced by the Spirit of God. [Bruce 117]

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The gift of tongues – and its importance

There has arisen a great deal of confusion concerning the gift of tongues as found in Corinth. They prided themselves chiefly on this gift which had become a source of confusion and disorder. There were varieties (kinds, *gene*) in this gift, but the gift was essentially an ecstatic utterance of highly wrought emotion that edified the speaker (14:4) and was intelligible to God (14:2,28). It was not always true that the speaker in tongues could make clear what he had said to those who did not know the tongue (14:13). It was not mere gibberish or jargon like the modern "tongues," but in a real language that could be understood by one familiar with that tongue as was seen on the great Day of Pentecost when people who spoke different languages were present. In Corinth, where no such variety of people existed, it required an interpreter to explain the tongue to those who knew it not. Hence Paul placed this gift lowest of all. It created wonder, but did little real good. This is the error of the Irvingites and others who have tried to reproduce this early gift of the Holy Spirit which was clearly for a special emergency and which was not designed to help spread the gospel among men. [Robertson 170]

The Corinthians' question on this subject, then, had been framed in such a way as to imply that the surest sign of the presence and power of the Spirit was glossolalia – utterance in languages not normally used by the speakers, as a result of appropriate stimulation of what since 1861 has been known as 'Broca's area', the centre for articulate speech in the third frontal convolution of the dominant cerebral hemisphere. Glossolalia differs from 'prophecy' ... in that the latter was uttered in the speaker's habitual tongue; moreover, Paul attaches much more value to prophecy stimulated by the Holy Spirit than he does to glossolalia. His first point in replying to the Corinthians' question is that it is the source and content of an utterance that are all-important, not the fact of its 'inspiration'. He knew that the phenomena of glossolalia and prophecy could be paralleled in paganism ... In classical literature, Apollo was particularly renowned as the source of ecstatic utterances, as on the lips of Cassandra of Troy, the priestess of Delphi or the Sybil of Cumae (whose frenzy as she prophesied under

