

# 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

## - The manifestations of the Spirit for the wellbeing of the church -

**Author: Evert Jan Hempenius**

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### Introduction

- ❖ The church is a unique organisation or better a unique community. The church is not run like a business. Scripture employs the image of a “body” to describe this unicity (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). Each part of the body serves the others parts.
- ❖ The Spirit of Christ makes himself manifest, in what we call “the gifts of the Spirit.” It is necessary to learn from the apostle Paul two things:
  - “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”
    - To each one.
    - The manifestation of the Spirit.
    - Is given for the common good.
  - “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”
    - All these are the work of one and the same Spirit.
    - And he gives them to each one.
    - Just as he determines.
  - The apostle stresses the point that the Spirit works, gives, and determines.
    - The “gifts” are manifestations and work of the Spirit.
    - Given to each one.
- ❖ This sermon outline can be used for a series of sermons on this subject.
  
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from 1 Corinthians. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

## Context

- ❖ 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 is part of 1 Corinthians 12-14. Paul discusses in these three chapters the tensions within the congregation of Corinth. There are two (or more) groups. The first group is advocating the “speaking in tongues” at the expense of the other group(s).
- ❖ A short outline of 1 Corinthians 12-14 is given below. It is advisable to read this whole passage, before looking at the details of chapter 12 and verse 7-11 in particular.

The problem		
1 Corinthians 12:1-3		Introducing the problem
The answer		
Part I: The gifts of the Spirit and the body of Christ		
1 Corinthians 12:4-6		
	12:4	Spiritual gifts and the Holy Spirit
	12:5	Spiritual gifts and the Lord
	12:6	Spiritual gifts and the Father
1 Corinthians 12:7-11		The Holy Spirit and the body of Christ
1 Corinthians 12:12-26		The Lord and the body of Christ
1 Corinthians 12:27-31		The Father and the body of Christ
Part II: Christian love as the most excellent way		
1 Corinthians 12:31-14:1		Love never fails.
Part III: The speaking in tongues and prophecy – order and peace during worship – solving the problem		
1 Corinthians 14:1-25		Speaking in tongues and prophecy compared
1 Corinthians 14:26-40		Orderly worship

- ❖ Some additional remarks.
  - In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, the apostle Paul makes clear that it is necessary to resolve all problems in the congregation starting with the reality(!) that the Christian is part of the community of the Triune God.
  - Paul elaborates this in the ensuing verses.
    - 1 Corinthians 12:4 > 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 – the Holy Spirit.

- 1 Corinthians 12:5 > 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 – the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 12:6 > 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 – the God and Father.
- Before he discusses the problem of speaking in tongues and prophecy, peace and order during the worship service (1 Cor 14), he makes clear that Christian love is the prerequisite for serving the Christian community. Love endures (1 Cor 13). This must be kept in mind while studying 1 Corinthians 12.

## Form and structure

- ❖ A detailed outline of 1 Corinthians 12:7-11:

<i>Starting point:</i> (verse 7)	Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.
<i>The manifestations of the Spirit:</i> (verse 8-10)	To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.
<i>Main point:</i> (verse 11)	All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

- ❖ Verse 8 has a chiasmic structure. A chiasmic structure enforces the argument and helps to memorize the thought expressed. A chiasmic structure is outlined as follows ABB'A'.

A. Spirit	❖ To one there is given through the Spirit
B. message of	○ the message of wisdom,
B' message of	○ to another the message of knowledge
A' Spirit	❖ by means of the same Spirit.

- ❖ Verse 9 has a parallel structure.

to another	faith	by the same Spirit,
to another	gifts of healing	by that one Spirit,

- ❖ Verse 10 has a list structure, enumerating different gifts.
  - to another miraculous powers,
  - to another prophecy,
  - to another distinguishing between spirits,
  - to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,
  - and to still another the interpretation of tongues.
- ❖ It is also possible to see three pairs of supplementary manifestations:
  - A1. to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,  
A2. to another miraculous powers,
  - B1. to another prophecy,  
B2. to another distinguishing between spirits,
  - C1. to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,  
C2. and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

## Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

- ❖ Chapter 12 must be understood against the background of the problems which arose due to a conflict within the church of Corinth about the spiritual gifts, especially the speaking in tongues.
  - One of the main problems in interpreting this chapter, that we have only access to the problems which arose in the church of Corinth true the text. There are no reports from the church itself, no pictures, no videos.
  - When we try to understand for instance the gifts of healing and the speaking in different kinds of tongues, we must be aware of the fact that we have scant information.
  - Different Christian traditions will read and apply these texts differently, especially those traditions (Pentecostal, charismatic) where healing and speaking in different tongues are considered as important signs of the Spirit, and those traditions where these gifts are not emphasized.
  - This paragraph contains a succinct overview of the different aspects of

- gifts of healing
- miraculous powers,
- prophecy,
- distinguishing between spirits,
- speaking in different kinds of tongues

#### Verse 7:

- ❖ Manifestation of the Spirit = “**φανέρωσις**”: *disclosure, announcement*, with objective genitive. The syntax of the genitive in **ἡ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος** (1 Cor 12:7) cannot be determined with certainty. Whether the genitive is subjective or objective, the expressions mean the same thing as **χάρισμα**.<sup>1</sup>
  - But Louw and Nida translate: “The Spirit’s presence is made clearly known in each one of us, for the good of all” (1 Cor 12:7).<sup>2</sup>
  - Bultmann & Lührmann comment: Thus **φανέρωσις** is the revelation imparted by the Spirit and consisting in the charismata listed in vv. 8 f. The revelation is not, then, theoretical instruction; **it entails acts in which the Spirit manifests Himself**.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ For the common good = “**τὸ συμφέρον**”: *for (someone’s) advantage* (1 Cor 12:7).<sup>4</sup>

#### Verse 8

- ❖ the message of wisdom = “**λόγος σοφίας**”:
  - 1. **the capacity to understand and function accordingly, wisdom**. There is
    - a. **natural wisdom that belongs to this world**. In contrast to God’s wisdom and the wisdom that comes from God.
      - Paul is contrasting human wisdom and the wisdom that comes from God in Christ in chapter 1, 2 and 3 of 1 Corinthians.
    - b. **transcendent wisdom**. **wisdom that God imparts to those who are close to God**. Solomon (Mt 12:42; Lk 11:31); Stephen (Acts 6:10); Paul (2 Pet 3:15); to those believers who are called to account for their faith (Lk 21:15). Good judgment in the face of human and specifically Christian demands (*practical*) *wisdom* (Acts 6:3; Col 4:5; Jas 1:5;

<sup>1</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 1049).

<sup>2</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, Vol. 1, p. 338).

<sup>3</sup> Bultmann, R., & Lührmann, D. (1964– Vol. 9, p. 6).

<sup>4</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 960).

3:13, 17).

The apostle (Paul) teaches people “**with all wisdom**” (Col 1:28), and Christians are to do the same among themselves (Col 3:16):

- “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”
- “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col 1:9).

As a spiritual gift the message of wisdom stands beside the message of knowledge (1 Cor 12:8).<sup>5</sup>

❖ The message of knowledge = “**λόγος γνώσεως**”:

- 1. **comprehension or intellectual grasp of something**, *knowledge* as possessed by God and humans.  
Although here *knowledge* and *wisdom* are almost synonymous, Paul distinguishes between them (1 Cor 12:8).<sup>6</sup>
- Paul: “Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some  
revelation  
or knowledge  
or prophecy  
or word of instruction?” (1 Cor 14:6).
- In Ephesians 3:19 he prays: “to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.” The apostle Paul contrasts knowledge acquired by using your mind and knowledge which can only be experienced by loving interaction and to know the love of Christ.

#### Verse 9

❖ Faith = “**πίστις**”:

- 1. **that which evokes trust and faith**
  - a. the state of being someone in whom confidence can be placed, ***faithfulness, reliability, fidelity, commitment***:

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<sup>5</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, pp. 934–935).

<sup>6</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 203).

- “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, **faithfulness**, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22, 23).
- 2. **state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted, trust, confidence, faith** in the active sense = **‘believing’ in God and Christ, their revelations, teachings, promises, their power and readiness to aid.** (Mk 11:22; 1 Pet 1:21; Heb 11)
  - “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (Heb 13:7).
  - “In him (Christ) and **through faith** in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence” (Eph 3: 12).

This is the belief and trust in the Lord’s help in physical and spiritual distress.

- “And **the prayer offered in faith** will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven” (Jn 5:15).
  - This faith is related to the Christian hope and love (1 Cor 13:13).

❖ Gifts of healing = “**χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων**”

- **“The Healing Church.** For, as the disciples shared the healing work in the earlier years, so the church continued to do so through the apostolic age. Although our information is confined to Acts and a few allusions in the Epistles, we know of the healing of a lame man at the temple, of the sick in the streets (Acts 5:12–16), of the spirit-possessed in Samaria (8:7), of Aneas’ paralysis (9:33–35); of the raising of Dorcas, the healing of a cripple at Lystra, and the slave girl at Philippi. We read of ‘extraordinary miracles’ at Ephesus (19:11), the restoration of Eutychus at Troas (20:9–12), and the healing of Publius’s father on Malta.

Indirectly we learn of signs and wonders during Paul’s missions (Rom 15:18–19; cf. 2 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:5). **It is evident that the gift of healing was by no means limited to apostles, but bestowed **as the Spirit wills**** (1 Cor 12:9, 11). *Although the picture so presented is incomplete and unsystematic, it is clear that the power to heal was neither universal nor constant, but spasmodic and occasional. An impression of surprise and wonder, of something ‘extraordinary’ indeed, shows that healing never became commonplace or automatic.*

Dorcas died. Epaphroditus was close to death for some time. Timothy, for years Paul’s constant attendant, was troubled with ‘frequent illnesses’ (1 Tim 5:23). Trophimus had to be left at Miletus, sick (2 Tim 4:20). There was repeated and serious illness in the churches at Corinth and Thessalonica (1 Cor 11:30; 1 Thess 4:13–18). Paul himself prayed, repeatedly and ‘unsuccessfully,’ for release from his physical affliction (2 Cor 12:7–9; Gal 4:13–15). The apostolic church had its invalids, gifts of healing notwithstanding.

Luke’s constant care of Paul reminds us that nonmiraculous means of healing were not neglected in that apostolic circle. Wine is recommended for Timothy’s weak stomach,

eye-salve for the Thyatiran church's blindness (metaphorical, but significant). James offers pastoral counsel for the sick: Send for elders of the church, who will encourage, advise, and intercede for the patient; if sin truly underlies the sickness, let the sick confess and receive forgiveness; let soothing oil, the universal panacea for all discomforts, be applied. (No brother gifted with healing is here mentioned: James 5:14–16.)

Paul offers his own example. Of course he prayed concerning his affliction, but like all truly Christian prayer, that petition was subject to God's will. When the trouble was not removed, he sought instead the meaning of his 'thorn'—and discovered it. In his case it was to keep him, despite his great privileges, humble and usable in God's hands. Thereafter he accepted the experience, although 'a messenger of Satan' in some respects, as permitted for a purpose. And he accepted with it the grace God promised to be 'sufficient' for endurance without resentment or self-pity, and the divine strength most plainly manifest through human weakness (2 Cor 12:1–10).

Behind that courageous attitude lay the profound conviction that God makes all things work together to make us Christ-like; and therefore nothing, nothing at all, neither tribulation, nor distress, nor peril, nor things present or to come, will separate us from God's love (Rom 8:28–29, 35–39).

Between them James and Paul describe what has become (for whatever reason) the 'normal' Christian attitude toward sickness, and it obviously finds justification in the New Testament. But so does the expectation that, when God so wills, miracles will sometimes occur."<sup>7</sup>

#### Verse 10

- ❖ Miraculous powers = “**ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων**”: the *power* that works wonders.<sup>8</sup> Another translation might be: “works that reveal power (of God).” These works can be distinguished from all the works God is working in all (1 Cor 12:6).
- ❖ Prophecy = “**προφητεία**”: *preaching the message of God, the gift of preaching the message of God; an inspired message or utterance; intelligible preaching, an intelligible message* (as opposed to speaking in tongues 1 Cor 14:6, 22).
  - Prophesize = “**προφητεύω**”: *proclaim God's message, preach; prophesy, predict; speak God's message intelligibly* (as opposed to speaking in tongues 1 Cor 14); *use prophetic insights to make something known*<sup>9</sup> (1 Cor 14:24, 25).
  - Romans 10:11-15 is helpful to understand this gift: “As the Scripture says, ‘Anyone who trusts in him (Christ) will never be put to shame.’ For there is no difference between Jew

<sup>7</sup> White, R. E. O. (1996). Heal, Health. In *Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology* (electronic ed., p. 329–330).

<sup>8</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 262).

<sup>9</sup> Newman, B. M., Jr. (1993, p. 156).

and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’

- Paul is quoting the prophets Joel (2:32) and Isaiah (28:16; 52:7).
- ❖ Speaking in different kinds of tongues (Or *languages*; also in verse 28; NIV) = “γένη γλωσσῶν”:
  - “γένη”:
    - 3. a relatively large people group, *nation, people*.
    - 4. entities united by common traits, *class, kind*.<sup>10</sup>
  - “γλωσσῶν”:
    - 2. a body of words and systems that makes up a distinctive language, *language, tongue*.
    - 3. an utterance outside the normal patterns of intelligible speech and therefore requiring special interpretation, *ecstatic language, ecstatic speech, tongue* (1 Cor 14:1–27, 39; 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; Ac 10:46; 19:6).<sup>11</sup>
      - When someone speaks a language which is not familiar to the hearers, a translation is also needed.
- ❖ The interpretation = “ἑρμηνεία”: 1. capacity of doing translation, *translation*.<sup>12</sup>
  - “For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit” (1 Cor 14:2). Therefore, interpretation of the mysteries is needed.

### Important

- ❖ Thiselton remarks: “Much exegesis becomes speculative because the verse is read through the lens of modern Western individualism. In a community situation, certain specific persons often come onto the scene as ‘gifted with a robust confidence that becomes supportive for the entire community. This may or may not presuppose some specific situation of crisis. The second problematic factor is a dualistic worldview which places each gift either too readily in the ‘*supernatura*’ *Deus ex machina* category or else views it too naturalistically and reductively as merely an enhanced *natural capacity*. It seems unwise and unnecessary to impose onto Paul

<sup>10</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 194, 195).

<sup>11</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 201, 202).

<sup>12</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 393).

dual models of 'natural' and 'supernatural' which fell into two only after the rise of English Deism and mechanistic world-views around the end of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth century. We must at the same time leave the door open to include inexplicable, prodigious acts of faith, such as 'faith to move mountains,' whatever the metaphorical status of this image (Mt 17:20; 1 Cor 13:2). **However, rather than focus on the category of miracle, it is more helpful to consider the conceptual entailments of faith in the God who is Almighty and sovereign in relation to his own world.**"<sup>13</sup>

## Exposition

### A short summary of 1 Corinthians 12

- ❖ The Corinthians are highly divided on the subject of the gifts of the Spirit (12:1-3). Some advocate the gift of speaking in tongues as the most important gift.
- ❖ Paul addresses this subject, first by pointing to the Triune God. It is impossible to focus on the spiritual gifts without giving any attention to the Spirit, the Lord, and God the Father (12:4-6). The Spirit gives, just as he determines (12:7-11), to serve the body of Christ, to the glory of the Father (12:12-26). God will appoint people to perform certain tasks, as an apostle, an evangelist, a prophet, to heal the sick, and to help others (12:27-31).
- ❖ When Paul concludes this chapter about the manifestations of the Spirit, he writes:
  - "And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?" (1 Cor 12:28-30)

### Remark

- ❖ It is not possible to discuss all aspects concerning the manifestations, which Paul has listed.

### Verse 7

- ❖ "**Now to each one.**" Each believer has received the Spirit who dwells in him/her (Jn 14:16-17). There are no exceptions. Now to each one receives emphasis. This is necessary because of the dispute among the Christians in Corinth (12:1-3). If someone doesn't speak in tongues, this doesn't mean that he hasn't received the Spirit. Everyone who says "Jesus is Lord", can do this by the Holy Spirit.
  - Robertson and Plummer comment: "The import of vv. 6 and 7 is, that the very various gifts, **bestowed not for merit but of free bounty**—*gratiae gratis datae*, are being

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<sup>13</sup> Thiselton, A. C. (2000, p. 945, 946).

distributed to each individual according to his capacity; and he must use the new powers, opportunities, and activities for the well-being of the whole. They are talents out of one and the same treasury of love, and must be used for the profit of the one body.”<sup>14</sup>

- ❖ **“the manifestation of the Spirit”**. The Holy Spirit reveals himself to the believers by different manifestations. The list Paul gives is not exclusive. In Romans 12:6-8, a different list is given.
- ❖ **“is given for the common good”**
  - **“Is given.”** by the Spirit himself.
  - **“For the common good.”** That means:
    - “so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have **equal concern for each other**” (1 Cor 12:25).
    - “So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts **that build up the church**” (1 Cor 14:12).
    - **“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.** If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.” (1 Pet 4:10, 11)
    - “What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. **All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church**” (1 Cor 14:26).
    - “From him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph 4:16; see Eph 4:7-16). This theme is elaborated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.
    - And not “for the personal good.”
  - 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1 must be kept in mind:
    - “But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way” (1 Cor 12:31). This is the way of love.
    - **“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts,** especially the gift of prophecy” (1 Cor 14:1).

#### Verse 8-10

- ❖ A distinction between “natural” and “supernatural” gifts is not warranted. God is our Creator. He has created the natural and the spiritual. A Christian doctor who has the wisdom and knowledge can heal many people. These are gifts or talents given by God. Luke was a medical doctor himself.

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<sup>14</sup> Robertson, A., & Plummer, A. (1911, p. 264–265).

- “As both Creator of our natural abilities and Redeemer of our whole being so that we receive new abilities, God works in a variety of ways to produce many diverse examples of his grace in action in the Christian community.”<sup>15</sup>
- ❖ Paul lists nine manifestations of the Spirit. This list is prompted by the situation in Corinth. In Romans 12:6-8 different gifts are listed:
  - “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”
  - These are the manifestations of the Spirit of Christ: “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Isa 11:2).
  - It is helpful to relate these gifts to the person and work of Jesus Christ. He revealed the wisdom, the knowledge, the faith (trust), the gift of healing and miracles, prophecy and the distinguishing between the spirits. Absent are the speaking in and interpretation of tongues.
  - “Wisdom” and “knowledge” are two sides of the same coin. Both are capacities of God imparted to humans.
    - Read Romans 11:33 “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!”
- ❖ “To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom.”
  - “Is given.”
    - “The tense of the verb *is given* (*didotai*) indicates that this is not necessarily a gift which is given for permanent possession and for regular manifestation by one particular Christian. It *could* mean that, but its far more likely meaning is to focus on God meeting the need of a particular situation by equipping one member of the body with this gift. The next time he might well use somebody else in a similar way. This is of pastoral importance, because there is often a strong tendency to speak, in a rather possessive and clinging way, of ‘my gift’; whereas Scripture teaches us here as elsewhere that they are God’s gifts to the body for the purpose of establishing Jesus as Lord.”<sup>16</sup>
    - By God’s grace, not as a special reward. These gifts cannot and must not be used to acquire a special position within the community of Christ.

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<sup>15</sup> Prior, D. (1985, p. 199).

<sup>16</sup> Prior, D. (1985, p. 200).

- Wisdom is an important gift of the Spirit. Whole books of the Bible are devoted to wisdom (Job, many Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes). Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God. Wisdom supports the Creation, the Law and the Gospel. See above for more information.
  - The message of wisdom “is discourse which expounds the mysteries of God’s counsels and makes known the means of salvation. It is a higher gift than the message of knowledge (λόγος γνώσεως), and hence is placed first, ... Commentators differ as to the exact differences between *wisdom* and *knowledge*; but *wisdom* is the more comprehensive term. **By it we know the true value of things through seeing what they really are; it is spiritual insight and comprehension** (Eph. 1:17).<sup>17</sup>
  - Wisdom is necessary to distinguish between good and evil, between justice and injustice, etc.
- ❖ **“To another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit.”**
- In 1 Corinthians the apostle Paul warns for “knowledge” which is not used for the common good: “We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Cor 8:1). This knowledge can even destroy the brother or sister” (1 Cor 8:10).
  - **This knowledge is knowledge by experience and personal knowledge.** It is a gift of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ **“To another faith by the same Spirit.”**
- “Being someone in whom confidence can be placed.”
  - This is not the saving faith, which is a gift of God to everyone who believes (Eph 2:8). It is a deep faith in the faithfulness of God. “Trust God.” This “faith which produces martyrs”<sup>18</sup> (Rev 14:12).
  - Paul wrote about this kind of faith in the next chapter: “If I have a faith that can move mountains” (1Cor 13:2; Mt 17:19, 20).
    - This might be a metaphor for a faith that can empower the believer and others.
- ❖ **“To another gifts of healing by that one Spirit.”**
- For “**gifts of healing**” see above. Note the plural “**gifts**” “enacted in a diversity of ways to address a variety of conditions, and not a uniform stereotypical ministry performed by a permanently endowed “healer.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Robertson, A., & Plummer, A. (1911, p. 265).

<sup>18</sup> Robertson, A., & Plummer, A. (1911, p. 266).

<sup>19</sup> Thiselton, A. C. (2000, p. 948).

- “By that one Spirit.” Paul stresses the effect that the Spirit is One, and that the wisdom, knowledge, faith and gifts of healing are manifestations of the same Spirit of Christ.
- ❖ **“To another miraculous powers.”** Or: “Works that reveal the power of God” (1 Cor 12:6).
- ❖ **“To another prophecy.”**
  - “But everyone **who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.**” “He who prophesies edifies the church” (1 Cor 14:3, 31).
  - “If an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, ‘God is really among you!’”(1 Cor 14:24,25).
  - This is “not necessarily predicting the future, but preaching the word with power (1 Cor 14:3, 24, 30). This gift implies special insight into revealed truths and a great faculty for making them and their consequences known to others”<sup>20</sup> in the present situation of the church.
- ❖ **“To another distinguishing between spirits.”**
  - “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 Jn 4:1).
- ❖ **“To another speaking in different kinds of tongues.”**
  - We do not precisely know what is meant by speaking in different kinds of tongues. There are several options, of which two are mentioned here:
    - 1. Different languages.
    - 2. Ecstatic speech.
  - Both options are possible.
    - 1. Corinth is at the crossroads of the Mediterranean world. People came from all parts of the (eastern) Mediterranean and spoke beside Greek and perhaps Latin, all kinds of different languages, which needed interpretation to be understood by others.
    - 2. The apostle Paul compared speaking in different tongues with music instruments and juxtaposed the speaking next to “some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction” (1 Cor 14:6-8).
- ❖ **“The interpretation of tongues.”** The interpretation of tongues is necessary to complement the “speaking in different tongues” during the gathering of the church:
  - “Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of

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<sup>20</sup> Robertson, A., & Plummer, A. (1911, p. 266).

languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me.” (1 Cor 14:9-11).

- “For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue **should pray that he may interpret what he says**” (1 Cor 14:13).
- “What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, **a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.**” (1 Cor 14:26).
- “If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and **someone must interpret**. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God” (1 Cor 14:17, 28).

#### Verse 11

##### ❖ **“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit.”**

- Paul underscores again the unity and sameness of the Spirit of Christ (See also 1 Cor 12:12, 13). This means that “that none has occasion for boasting, or for a sense of inferiority.”<sup>21</sup>

##### ❖ **“And he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”**

- **And it is the responsibility of the believer** to use these manifestations of the Spirit to edify the others and the church (1 Cor 14:12, 17, 19).
- The church and the believer cannot claim the manifestations of the Spirit. At the same time, they can:
  - “Follow the way of love and **eagerly desire spiritual gifts**, especially the gift of prophecy” (1 Cor 14:1).
  - “So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, **try to excel in gifts that build up the church**” (1 Cor 14:12).

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<sup>21</sup> Thiselton, A. C. (2000, p. 989; quoting Barrett).

## Application

### Before

- ❖ Praise Jesus Christ. He is the head of his body, manifest in the local congregation. He has saved us by his precious blood.
- ❖ Praise the Father who has given the Holy Spirit to be with us (Jn 14: 15-17).
- ❖ Praise the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, Discernment, and Tongues.
  - Verse 7 and 11 are the most important. The gifts are the property and a manifestation of the Spirit, who is God himself.
  - It is not necessary to explain all the gifts, select just two or three, or highlight one.
- ❖ Identify the spiritual gifts found in your congregation. How can your church members contribute to the edification of the church as a whole and its individual members?

### Verse 7, 11

- ❖ The edification of the church is the criterium for the use of the Spiritual gifts:
  - “For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say ‘Amen’ to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified” (1 Cor 14:13-17).
  - “The operation of God’s Holy Spirit is not a theory and we must not reduce it to a matter for theoretical debate. **The Spirit produces results, varied results which can be noticed: changed lives, transformed relationships, increasing congregations, effective testimony, released talents.** As each of these is energized by the Spirit, the Lordship of Jesus is demonstrated in as many diverse ways as there are people who possess this energy.”<sup>22</sup>
  - “**The Christian community is the community of the Holy Spirit, of the living God.** He is a richly diverse God and every single member contributes to this living diversity.”<sup>23</sup>
  - The apostle Peter wrote: “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it

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<sup>22</sup> Prior, D. (1985, p. 197).

<sup>23</sup> Prior, D. (1985, p. 198).

with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet 4:10, 11).

- These concluding remarks of Prior are important: “If a Christian falls into the trap of appropriating any gift or ministry to himself, then the Lord may well steer that person away from a situation where he assumes (or it is assumed by those around him) that *his* gifts, *his* ministry, are crucial for the body of Christ in that place. Such a sense of importance, even indispensability, subtly takes the focus off Jesus as Lord, and the sensitivity of the Holy Spirit in this very area (‘He will glorify me’) leads him to move the person on from the situation or into another area of ministry. This is a painful experience, and we do well to remember that God is very sensitive about the sovereignty of his Spirit in his church.<sup>26</sup> The Spirit himself is also very sensitive about the prominence of Jesus as ‘head over all things for the church, which is his body’. This is the thrust of 12:11, ‘All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.’ Any tendency nowadays to talk of ‘my church ... my gifts ... my ministry’ can have Corinthian overtones.”<sup>24</sup>

#### ❖ “Wisdom”

- This manifestation is especially given to “leaders” in the church.
  - “Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them” (Acts 6:3).

#### ❖ “Knowledge”

- “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love” (2 Pet 1:5-7).
  - Peter encourages the believers to grow in knowledge.
- “For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Cor 4:6).
- “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col 1:9).
- Knowledge without love is nothing (1 Cor 13:2).
  - “I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another” (Rom 15:14).

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<sup>24</sup> Prior, D. (1985, p. 201).

- By this knowledge, people will know Christ and be instructed in the faith and understanding.

❖ **“Faith”**

- Examples of this faith are found in Hebrews 11:32-34
  - “And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.”
  - And in modern times: “George Muller, Hudson Taylor, William Wilberforce, the Reformation martyrs, who manifest equal faith and are a constant encouragement.” “For this reason a regular diet of Christian biography greatly strengthens personal growth in the Lord. These individuals all demonstrate the gift of faith. **But it would be a pity if we allowed such pinnacles of faith in action to take this gift beyond the experience of any local church and any Christian.** The stage may be Coventry (UK) rather than China; the drama may be to do with a church’s budget rather than the abolition of slavery; the plot may revolve around discouragement in the youth club rather than establishing a network of orphanages in Bristol.”<sup>25</sup>

❖ **“Gifts of Healing” and “miraculous powers.”** It is advisable to take time to explain these gifts, especially because they can be abused by some “healing ministries.”

- Prior remarks: “It must be stressed with special care in this area of ministry that this gift, like all the gifts in this paragraph, is to be exercised in the worshipping life of the Christian community. When so-called healers and exorcists embark on itinerant ministries of a specialist nature, operating usually on their own apart from any local church, it is a sure sign that something is badly wrong with both individual and, probably, the local church. By placing this gift firmly within the body of Christ, Paul had an inbuilt safeguard both against over-valuing this gift and against specialists in such a ministry.”<sup>26</sup>

❖ **“Prophecy” and “distinguishing the spirits.”** These two are related and are still important for the local church.

- Thiselton quotes: “Héring observes that since we know that ‘the aim of prophecy is to edify, exhort and encourage, **it coincides therefore to a large extent with what we call a**

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<sup>25</sup> Prior, D. (1985, p. 203).

<sup>26</sup> Prior, D. (1985, p. 207).

**sermon today.**<sup>27</sup> Discussing this opinion, he writes: “All the same, it would be a serious mistake to read back onto Paul modern styles of pastoral preaching. Few churches appear “to test” preaching from the pulpit, and nothing suggests that early Christian prophecy was a sustained, uninterrupted, twenty-minute monologue delivered by a “trained” speaker. Moreover, prophetic preaching differed from *teaching* in that virtually all studies of the subject agree that it addressed issues of the moment, albeit by bringing teaching and gospel truth to bear on the present.”<sup>28</sup>

- Much more can be said. Today’s sermon needs to serve the common good!
- “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good” (1 Thess 5:19-21).
  - Not every sermon is a word of God!
- ❖ **“Speaking in different kinds of tongues” and “the interpretation of tongues”** To the Corinthians it was one of the most important manifestations of the Spirit. In some Christian communities, it still is. It is important to see, that Paul de-emphasizes the importance for the church as a whole. At the same time, he leaves room to exercise these gifts in private (1 Corinthians 14:1-25).

## Epilogue

- ❖ Some expositors state that these gifts ceased to exist after the apostolic period, based on the fact there are no records of the existence of these gifts in the early church history. They can also refer to:
  - “Love never fails.  
But where there are prophecies, they will cease;  
where there are tongues, they will be stilled;  
where there is knowledge, it will pass away.  
For we know in part and we prophesy in part,  
but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears” (1 Cor 13:8-10).

Two questions can be asked:

1. When does the perfection come? Or has the perfection already come?
2. Why should the manifestation of knowledge have passed away? The church is still in need of knowledge, and wisdom, and faith as manifestations of the Spirit.

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<sup>27</sup> Thiselton, A. C. (2000, p. 960).

<sup>28</sup> Thiselton, A. C. (2000, p. 960, 961).

- ❖ “Those who know that glossolalia is not God’s path for them and those for whom it is a proven enrichment should neither try to impose their own way on others, nor judge others inferior for being different, nor stagger if someone in their camp transfers to the other, believing that God has led him or her to do so. Those who pray with tongues and those who pray without tongues do it to the Lord; they stand or fall to their own master, not their fellow-servants; and in the same sense that there is in Christ neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, so in Christ there is neither glossolalist nor non-glossolalist.” — J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God*.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> A quote from *Keep in Step with the Spirit*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/913745-those-who-know-that-glossolalia-is-not-god-s-path-for>

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