

**1 Corinthians 12:1-11** Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. <sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans, *you were* led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led. <sup>3</sup> Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. <sup>7</sup> But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup> For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

### "Ministry in the Spirit"

One evening I was at my grandparents house and after dinner while Grandma was cleaning up, Granddaddy and I went in to the living room to watch TV. Granddaddy did his church on TV. You would either find him watching the news, the Nashville Network, The Andy Griffith Show, or and less frequently some preacher. That evening as he began to channel surf, he figured since I was there we would watch a preacher. So, he found the Christian Channel and a PTL revival style camp meeting was underway. They were singing praise songs and finally things began to quiet down as the worship leader started doing praise prayer. You know, you keep saying, "Praise you Jesus. Hallelujah," but not necessarily in that order. All of a sudden someone out in the congregation began to speak in tongues and when he finished the worship leader asked if there was an interpretation. A few moments later someone shouted out what sounded very similar to Old Testament words of encouragement from the prophets. Well, Granddaddy had never heard anything like that before. He knew about Holy Rolling and all that, but he didn't think that stuff was for real. He looked over at me with this, "What in the world was that" look on his face. I looked back with a look that said "weird, eh?" Talking with Granddaddy often involved looks rather than words. He started shaken his head back and forth in disbelief like he'd just seen a ghost or heard the devil speaking or something. Then he returned to his calm demeanor and switched the channel over to the Nashville Network. My grandparents were Baptists, yet Grandma would say she really enjoyed those Four Square Gospel revival meetings she went to with her sister. I think they both were willing to tolerate a little Charisma, but Holy Rolling just went too far.

Well, when talking about the Holy Spirit in most mainline churches, I think the consensus would be like the feelings of my grandparents: a little charisma is okay, but anything Pentecostal looking is just a bit off the deep end. In fact, we would call it scary. I don't think it would be an overstatement to say that if someone were to stand up this morning and begin to speak in tongues or

prophecy that next Sunday either that person or most everybody else wouldn't be back until everyone agreed that that's not the kind of church we are.

But, how little we realize that the way we do worship now is very different than it was back in the early church. The way we do worship did not come about until the 1500's. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox worship dates back to the 300's when the Church moved into public buildings and became an institution. We are not really sure what worship looked like from 100 to 300. But as far as worship in the first century of Christianity, 1 Corinthians is about all we have and it paints a picture of early Christian worship being what we would call Pentecostal. They would have gathered in somebody's home for singing, a time of praise prayer, and then a time when individuals would exercise grace-gifts or spiritual gifts – tongues, interpretations, healings, and words of wisdom and knowledge. Then there would be a meal called a Love Feast which included the Lord's Supper. Either before or after dinner there would have been teaching from the Old Testament or a letter from one of the Apostles or on Jesus story.

This is most likely what worship would have looked like in the Gentile churches. It was very much like idol worship in the pagan temples. People would bring a sacrifice to the priest or priestess. They would sing songs praising the god or goddess until they or the priestess became worked up into a frenzy and began to speak in tongues or utter oracles. Then they would either take the sacrifice home or go into a designated feast room in the temple and have a feast which quite often degenerated into a drunken orgy involving prostitutes. This is why Paul is so adamant in 1 Corinthians that women be silent and keep their heads covered. He didn't want Christian woman appearing to be like the temple priestesses and prostitutes.

In Jewish Christianity things would have been a bit tamer. Having been driven out of the synagogues, they would have met in homes and conducted a service much like Friday night synagogue worship. They would have had prayers and hymns praising God the Father and Jesus for creation and salvation. They would have recounted the story of the many times God had delivered them culminating in telling the story of Jesus and stories about him. There would have been a teaching and then they would share a meal which included the Lord's Supper. There would have still been room for people to exercise their spiritual gifts so that they could minister to one another and grow together in Christ. In both cases and as we shall see in two weeks the bond of love between them was very, very important.

One of the problems Paul wrote to address in Corinth was a concern that their worship was looking a lot like idol worship in the downtown temples with the exception of the immorality. Paul writes to teach them about the things of the Spirit. They had all been led astray before in idol worship and now they wanted to make sure that it was the Holy Spirit who was speaking and acting through them. Paul says no one speaking by the Holy Spirit can curse or speak against Jesus and only by means of the Holy Spirit can someone say Jesus is Lord and speak for him. Paul says there are many different kinds of charismatic gifts but they all come from the same Spirit. There are many, many ways of ministering to

one another but it is all the ministry of the Lord Jesus in and through them. And, God will work all kinds of wonders in their midst, but it is the one and same God.

In their worship the Spirit would manifest himself through each person by means of a spiritual gift for the good of everyone. I suspect that worship in the early church was very spontaneous and dynamic. When Christians got together the Holy Spirit was there and enabled by him they ministered to one another and it drew them together in love. This is ministry in the Spirit. God equipped them each by the Holy Spirit to minister to one another and this was Jesus ministry to and through them.

This morning I hope to open up your thinking a bit as to what does and should happen here in Sunday morning. I'm not saying that we need to start looking Pentecostal. I just want you to begin to look at our time together here on Sunday morning in a different way. Our time together in worship and in fellowship is more than just a group of fellow believers gathering together to worship and drink tea on Sunday mornings. If you know and can say Jesus is Lord or at least can't say that he is accursed, it is entirely likely that the Holy Spirit has equipped you with a spiritual gift for ministry in this congregation. Ministry is not the sole domain of the minister and maybe the elders. Rather, Jesus involves us all in his ministry to his body. Our time together on Sunday mornings isn't just a time for worship, learning, and socializing. It is a time for Christ to minister to us through each other by means of the Holy Spirit and his gifts with the intent of building a stronger bond of love between. We each should leave here with the sense that I have been the giver and the receiver of the spontaneous and dynamic miracle working love of God. We are here not just to worship and fellowship together. We are here to experience the ministry of Christ through each other as the Spirit enables it. What a wonderful thing. This is truly what the church is about. It is here that God can speak to us and heal us through each other. I have seen with my own eyes in my church experience how a congregation will just begin to flourish as the members begin to realize that this is a time to share their lives and be ministered to. When it comes upon a congregation that we are here to minister and to be ministered to by the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst, the Christian life ceases to be a list of duties we do for God and becomes living in the life of Christ. Please take these thoughts home with you and ponder them. Don't let this sermon be just one more sermon that you've forgotten by the time lunch is over. Spend this week asking Christ to make you spiritual giftedness known to you. This truly is what church is all about, the ministry of Jesus Christ being worked in and through us be the loving presence of the Holy Spirit. Amen.