

a sermon from I CORINTHIANS 13:1:

IF I SPEAK IN TONGUES BUT HAVE NOT LOVE

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I. AN OPENING PRAYER

“O GOD, Who as at... [Pentecost] didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of Thy HOLY SPIRIT; Grant us by The same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His Holy comfort; through the merits of CHRIST JESUS our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of The same Spirit, one GOD, world without end. Amen.”¹

II. A SCRIPTURE – I CORINTHIANS 13:1 – IF WE HAVE NOT LOVE

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”²

III. A PROPOSITION

The Divine purposes of spiritual gifts are these: First, they must go towards the glorifying of GOD. Second, they must be in the service of building up The Church, that is, our fellow saints in CHRIST. Third, they must be for the stirring up of non-believers towards The Truth of Gospel salvation. And Fourth, above all, they must be employed with love!

IV. INTRODUCTION

It is not what spiritual gift that The Almighty blesses a man with that determines his salvation or lack thereof! Spiritual gifts are given for the edification of The Church, to testify to unbelievers of GOD’s Truth and to glorify The LORD. What determines salvation of a man’s soul is if he believes and confesses before GOD and man that JESUS CHRIST is Lord! For there is no other Name under Heaven by which men may be saved! Now there are generally two views of the gift of tongues today: First, that tongues was a spiritual gift given only to The early Church and the age for that form of working of The HOLY SPIRIT is long past. Second, that the gift of tongues is very much alive and active, through The same HOLY SPIRIT, in The Church today.

¹ 1, Book of Common Prayer of The Protestant Episcopal Church, 1928 Version,” p 180.

“WHITSUNTIDE. Pentecost, commonly called Whitsunday, The Collect.”

<http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1928Standard/propers.pdf>.

² 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 13:1.

Those of the first group often look at those in the second and say, “You people are overcome with emotionalism and self glory!” And there is often a lack of Christian love of the first group to the second, saying, “We wonder if you are truly saved in CHRIST?” Those of the second group often look at those in the first and say, “You people are spiritually dead and overcome with the things of the world!” And there is often a lack of Christian love of the second group to the first, saying, “We wonder if you are truly saved in CHRIST?”

Now throughout The Church on earth, there are those of both the first and second groups that place a litmus test over the souls of their fellow Christians, that of for example the gift of tongues. And while we may look to The Holy Bible to see how The HOLY SPIRIT works in The Body of CHRIST on earth when administering this spiritual gift, the one thing we do not see in tongues – either in its absence or in its presence – is as the means of salvation of men before The Almighty! Tongues, or any spiritual gift, are the result of The Spirit of GOD living in us. But the fruit of The HOLY SPIRIT’s work in the lives of the saints – or lack thereof – is measured by other means, beginning with Christian love!

Let us look together with Saint Paul at these things with humble hearts and open ears! The key verse before us is I CORINTHIANS 13:1, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”³ As Matthew Henry observes here, Paul emphasizes that the most excellent spiritual gift is charity, i.e. love. And further, that no matter how many spiritual gifts we may receive, if we do not exercise them properly with love, they are as dust in the wind and we are as vain clanging cymbals! So in I CORINTHIANS 13 speaks of the superiority of love “...By showing the necessity and importance of it...; By giving a description of its properties and fruits...; By showing how much it excels the best of gifts and other graces, by its continuance, when they shall be no longer in being, or of any use!”⁴

³ 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 13:1.

⁴ 3, Matthew Henry Notes, I CORINTHIANS 13. Introduction.

So today we shall ask four questions: First, what are the spiritual gifts? Second what are the fruits of The Spirit? Third, what is the measure of a man's salvation? Fourth, what are GOD's purposes for spiritual gifts in The Church? This will bring us to better focus on our proposition: The Divine purposes of spiritual gifts are these: First, they must go towards the glorifying of GOD. Second, they must be in the service of building up The Church, that is, our fellow saints in CHRIST. Third, they must be for the stirring up of non-believers towards The Truth of Gospel salvation. And Fourth, above all, they must be employed with love!

V. WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

First, what are the spiritual gifts? The Catechism of The Catholic Church observes, "Grace is first and foremost the gift of The Spirit, Who justifies and sanctifies us. But Grace also includes the gifts that The Spirit grants us to associate us with His work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of The Body of CHRIST, The Church." These can be "Sacramental Graces, gifts proper to the different Sacraments." These can be "Special Graces, also called 'charisms' after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning 'favor,' 'gratuitous gift,' 'benefit'..." Special Graces are for example "the gift of miracles or of tongues." All Special Graces or charisms given by The HOLY SPIRIT are for this one purpose, pointing men "toward sanctifying Grace [for the saving of men's lives and souls] and are intended for the common good of The Church. They are at the service of [Christian] charity, which builds up The Church."⁵

Paul tells us in I CORINTHIANS 12:4-10, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but The same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but The same Lord... For to one is given by The Spirit The Word of wisdom; to another The Word of knowledge by The same Spirit; To another faith by The same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by The same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of

⁵ 5, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 2003, p 539-540. "II. Grace."

tongues.”⁶ Adam Clarke offers this humbling thought, that “... Whatever gifts GOD has bestowed, or in what various ways soever The Spirit of GOD may have manifested Himself, it is all for the common benefit of The Church. GOD has given no gift to any man for his own private advantage, or exclusive profit. He has it for the benefit of others as well as for his own salvation.”⁷

VI. WHAT ARE THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT?

Second, what are the fruits of The SPIRIT living and working in us, as opposed to the fruits of the world, the flesh and the devil? The early Church father Origen observes, “The works of the antichrists, and of those who pretend that they can work miracles as though they were the disciples of CHRIST, are said to be lying signs and wonders. They prevail among those who perish with all of the deceit of unrighteousness. In contrast, the works of CHRIST and His disciples did not have deceit for their fruits. Rather, they had the salvation of human souls [as their object]... Why [then] not test... [men] by their lives, morals and the consequences of their miracles [done in The Name of our Lord]? Do they result in the injury of men or in the reformation of conduct” as a result of salvation and rebirth at The Cross of CHRIST?⁸

Paul answers in GALATIANS 5:19-23, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit The Kingdom of GOD. But the fruit of The Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”⁹

⁶ 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 12:4-10.

⁷ 6, Clarke’s Commentary and Critical Notes, I CORINTHIANS 12:7, p 585. “Verse 7. The manifestation of The Spirit.”

⁸ 7, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Gifts of The Spirit,” p 302, 2nd entry. “Origen (c. 248, E), 4.451.”

⁹ 8, NKJV, GALATIANS 5:19-23.

As Adam Clarke observes, the works of the flesh derive from "...the evil and fallen state of the soul, no longer under the guidance of GOD's Spirit and right reason, but under the animal passions; and they are even rendered more irregular and turbulent by the influence of sin; so that man is in a worse state than the brute: and so all-commanding is this evil nature that it leads men into all kinds of crimes..." against GOD's Laws, the evil of which is so totally second nature to such men, that their flesh reigns over all that they do and are, to their earthly sorrow and eternal damnation!¹⁰

But as Clarke says further, when a man is saved in CHRIST and the hand of GOD reaches into his soul, he is born again from within as a new creature by The HOLY SPIRIT, "...the sinful dispositions of the human heart and spirit... [are washed away, now] changed or purified... by The Grace and Spirit of GOD, are represented by the Apostle [Paul] as trees, one yielding good the other bad fruit; the productions of each being according to the nature of the tree... The bad seed produced a bad tree, yielding all manner of bad fruit [of evil]; the good seed produced a good tree, bringing forth fruits of the most excellent kind..." of righteousness.¹¹

VII. WHAT IS THE MEASURE OF A MAN'S SALVATION?

Third, what is the measure of a man's salvation? The measure of a man's salvation is not the number and intensity of spiritual gifts he is blessed with by The HOLY SPIRIT. Their apparent presence in a Churchman does not guarantee the salvation of that man's soul. Nor does their apparent absence in a Churchman declare the absence of salvation of another man's soul. The measure of salvation of men's souls is faith and confession,¹² repentance and Baptism,¹³ into JESUS CHRIST The Lord and Saviour, and in Him alone!

¹⁰ 6, Clarke's Commentary and Critical notes, GALATIANS 5:19, p 937. "Verse 17. For the flesh lusteth against the flesh."

¹¹ 6, Ibid., GALATIANS 5:22, p 939. "Verse 22. But the fruit of The Spirit."

¹² 2, KJV, ROMANS 10:9, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth The Lord JESUS, and shalt believe in thine heart that GOD hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

¹³ 2, KJV, ACTS 2:38, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in The Name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of The Holy Ghost."

An early Church catechism book, the Apostolic Constitutions, notes that not every saint in CHRIST need be endowed with a spiritual gift. “But only such a one who has been graciously given this gift – for the purpose that it may be advantageous to the salvation of the unbelievers... [For] those who have received such [spiritual] gifts may not exalt themselves against those who have not received them... Otherwise, there... [would be] no man who has believed in GOD through CHRIST who has not received some spiritual gift... Therefore, do not let anyone who works signs and wonders [from a spiritual gift] judge any of the faithful who is not given the same... let none of you exalt himself against his brother...”¹⁴

What does Saint Peter declare, in the power of The HOLY SPIRIT, to Israel in ACTS 4:10-12? “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by The Name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth, Whom ye crucified, Whom GOD raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become The Head of The Corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”¹⁵

VIII. WHAT ARE GOD’S PURPOSE FOR SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH?

Fourth, what are GOD’s purpose for spiritual gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT in the saints of GOD within The Church? They must go towards the glorifying of GOD. They must be in the service of building up The Church, that is, our fellow saints in CHRIST. They must be for the stirring up of non-believers towards The Truth of Gospel salvation. And, above all, they must be employed with love and charity!

What then are not The Divine purposes of spiritual gifts in general and tongues in particular in The Church? First, they are NOT to go towards glorifying men, not even Christian men! Second, they must NOT be used in the ripping down of The Church, that is, our fellow saints in CHRIST! Third, they are NOT for the hardening and driving

¹⁴ 7, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Gifts of The Spirit,” p 303, 4th entry. “Apostolic Constitutions (compiled c.390, E), 7.479-7.481; extended discussion: 7.479-7.481.”

¹⁵ 2, KJV, ACTS 4:10-12.

away non-believers from The Truth of Gospel salvation! And Fourth, above all, they are NOT to employed without love, or worse, with animosity and even outright hatred towards one another!

Now The early Church at Corinth had apparently been blessed with many believers who had received many spiritual gifts, as we may gather in reading I CORINTHIANS, for the Divine purpose and proper uses of them are throughout Paul's First Epistle to that congregation. Albert Barnes observes, "It is evident that many in The Church at Corinth had been thus favoured; and it is evident that they had greatly abused these endowments, and that those who were thus favoured had claimed a... [higher place] of honour above those who had been less distinguished. It is not improbable that they had, in their letter to Paul, ¹⁶ ...requested his counsel on this subject, and asked him to teach them what measure of higher honour should be given to those who had been thus endowed."¹⁷

So Paul writes in II CORINTHIANS 4:6-7, "For GOD, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of The Glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of GOD, and not of us."¹⁸ And in I CORINTHIANS 14:12, "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of The Church."¹⁹ And in I CORINTHIANS 14:22, of speaking in tongues and prophesy, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe."²⁰ And above all in I CORINTHIANS 13:1, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."²¹

¹⁶ 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 7:1, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me..."

¹⁷ 4, Barnes' New Testament Notes, I CORINTHIANS 12, p 2451, paragraph 1. Introduction.

¹⁸ 2, KJV, II CORINTHIANS 4:6.

¹⁹ 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 14:12.

²⁰ 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 14:22.

²¹ 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 13:1.

IX. IN CONCLUSION

Barnes sums up Saint Paul here for us: First, "...that all those endowments were conferred by The HOLY GHOST, and were all for the use of The Church; that The Church was one, but that there was a necessity for diversified operations in That Church; and that, therefore, no one should value himself on that gift above his brother, and no one should feel himself dishonoured because he had not been thus favoured. All filled important places in The Church..." just as every part of the human body serves a purpose for the whole.²² Second, Paul "...recommends *love*, or charity, as of more value than all other spiritual gifts put together, and therefore recommends that that should be especially the object of their desire."²³

Whatever our views of spiritual gifts – that they are either for the early Church or are still for The Church today – let us walk with one another in Christian charity. Let us recognize the proper Biblical uses – and misuses – of spiritual gifts. Let us not place false tests of the salvation of our fellow saints before GOD and man. Let us not run after our own glory, provoking one another to envy. Let us instead seek to glorify The LORD in every part of our Christian lives. For all of us who confess and believe,²⁴ and repent and are Baptized,²⁵ into JESUS CHRIST as Lord and Saviour do live in The same Spirit of GOD that bestows spiritual gifts as he sees fit to His Church. And if we live in The Spirit, let us also walk in The Spirit one with another in The Divine Love!

We have asked four questions: First, what are the spiritual gifts? Second, what are the fruits of The Spirit? Third, what is the measure of a man's salvation? Fourth, what is GOD's purpose for spiritual gifts in The Church? We have answered that first, the spiritual gifts of Special Grace – the charismas given to Christians within The Church by The HOLY SPIRIT – are wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy,

²² 4, Barnes New Testament Notes, I CORINTHIANS 12, p 2451, (1). Overview, I CORINTHIANS 12-14.

²³ 4, Ibid., I CORINTHIANS 12, p 2451, (2). Overview, I CORINTHIANS 12-14.

²⁴ 2, KJV, ROMANS 10:9, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth The Lord JESUS, and shalt believe in thine heart that GOD hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

²⁵ 2, KJV, ACTS 2:38, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in The Name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of The Holy Ghost."

discerning of spirits, tongues and interpretation of tongues.²⁶ That second, the fruits of The Spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness [and] self-control...”²⁷ That third, the measure of a man’s salvation is, not the presence or absence of spiritual gifts, but rather faith and confession in JESUS CHRIST as Lord and Saviour. For there is no other Name under Heaven by which men may be saved.²⁸

Fourth, that GOD’s purposes for spiritual gifts in The Church are these: That they must go towards the glorifying of GOD. That they must be in the service of building up The Church, that is, our fellow saints in CHRIST. That they must be for the stirring up of non-believers towards The Truth of Gospel salvation. And, above all, that they must be employed with love! For first and before all else, as Paul declares in I CORINTHIANS 13:1, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”²⁹ In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN!

²⁶ 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 12:4-10.

²⁷ 8, NKJV, GALATIANS 5:22-23.

²⁸ 2, KJV, ACTS 4:10-12.

²⁹ 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 13:1.

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