

First Corinthians

June 1, 2025
Chapter 12

The Matters of the Spiritual

“Manifest Grace of the Holy Spirit”
Chapter 12:7-9

In verses 4–6, Paul presents the roles of the three Persons of the Trinity in reverse order. In verse 4, he discusses the role of the Third Person of the Trinity. He says, *“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.”* The word “varieties” means *different*. The term “gifts” should be translated into English as *gifts of grace*. This phrase is called a *genitive of source*, meaning that the first element in the phrase comes from the last element. With the *gifts of grace*, all the *gifts* derive from the *grace* of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Holy Spirit enables individuals to work without any merit on their part. The individual serves as a tool of the Holy Spirit’s grace, not as the director of it. It is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit to dispense “*grace*” to individuals.

In verse 5, Paul presents the Second Person of the Trinity when he says, *“And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.”* We have already defined the word “varieties.” It means *different* in all three verses. However, with the LORD, it is His responsibility to dispense *ministries*. As stated, the word *ministries* would be better translated as “*services*.” In Ephesians 4:11-12, we find that these *ministries*, or *services* offered as gifts to the Church, are through men selected to be *“Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers … for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”* With the death of the Apostle John, the gift of the offices of Apostles and Prophets ceased. Today, the LORD works through Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers.

In verse 6, Paul presents the work of the First Person of the Trinity when he says, *“There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all.”* The word for “*effects*” means “*the workings*.” In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he will adhere to the strict job description for God the Father in Romans 8:28. *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

In summary, the Holy Spirit provides *grace* to the saints in the Church, the LORD offers *services* to the saints in the Church, and God enables good *works* for the saints in the Church.

4. The Purpose of the Manifestation of the Spirit (12:7)

With everything said so far, Paul is ready to focus on and articulate the purpose of the Spirit’s grace by showing how He manifests it for the common good of the saints in the Church. Verse 7.

⁷ *But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

Each saint is given a “*manifestation of the Spirit*.” Is this a gift that the saint can use? No, it is not. The term “*manifestation*” refers to *revealing* or making *known*. It describes how the Holy Spirit expresses Himself and works through a saint to witness and testify to both saints and sinners. He does this “*for the common good*.” The purpose of the Holy Spirit’s manifestations is not for personal gain, self-promotion, or competition, but rather for the benefit of the entire community of believers.

Let’s not overlook Paul’s emphasis that “*each one*” receives a spiritual manifestation from the Holy Spirit, highlighting that every believer has a role to fulfill in the Church.

5. The Holy Spirit's Word of Wisdom (12:8a)

Paul will now explain how the Holy Spirit reveals Himself through His work, beginning with the Holy Spirit's word of wisdom. Verse 8a.

^{8a} For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit,

The Holy Spirit sometimes works through saints by providing a "*word of wisdom*." This manifestation of wisdom is more than just intellectual understanding; it encompasses the ability to make godly decisions and offer counsel that reflects God's heart and will. Where worldly wisdom falls short, the Holy Spirit's "*word of wisdom*" delivers divine insight, perception, astuteness, and prudence. It is not merely something the Holy Spirit does for the saint He is using at the moment; rather, He uses that saint to share the "*word of wisdom*" with another saint or sinner who needs to hear a divine message from the LORD. When the Holy Spirit directs the saint He is using, it signifies a different manifestation known as "*discernment*," which we will discuss in verse 10 of this chapter.

The "*word of wisdom*" does not reside in the saints. It comes to the saint in a time of need to help another. The saint can ask the Holy Spirit to grant a "*word of wisdom*" to speak into the lives of others, but that is rarely how the Holy Spirit operates. A "*word of wisdom*" cannot be learned in advance or planned. We have no control over which of these manifestations the Holy Spirit chooses to use in our lives. This is true for this "*word of wisdom*." It is entirely up to the will of the Holy Spirit when and how He employs it in our lives. No doubt, every saint will experience being used by the Holy Spirit at least once in their lives to deliver a "*word of wisdom*" to someone who needs to hear it. Quite honestly, after fifty years of ministry, many people have shared with me the things I have said that changed their lives in meaningful ways. It always surprises me that the statements that impacted them were never in my lesson notes or planned messages. They were always something I said spontaneously and never repeated. I was taken aback when Coach Smith and his wife approached me to thank me for something I had said to them twenty years earlier. They had always struggled with saving money. Sitting around the church dinner table on a Wednesday night in 1990, I remarked, "You save money the same way you get out of debt; you simply send a savings payment to yourself instead of a creditor. If you can pay off a \$50,000 car in five years, you can save \$50,000 simultaneously." Honestly, those words did not affect my life at all, and I did not think of them again until 2010. They did not respond that night, but in 2010, out of the blue, they came to thank me for those words. I do not know how much debt they had, but they told me they paid it off in five years and saved the same amount every five years for four to five cycles. Retirement was secure for them because of those words. You can bet I started repeating those words frequently in 2010. However, I do not believe they held as much impact in the ears and hearts of others. Indeed, the Holy Spirit was looking ahead in their lives and placed those "*words of wisdom*" on my tongue specifically for them in that moment in 1990.

This manifestation of the Holy Spirit remains vibrant in the lives of the saints whom the Holy Spirit has chosen to employ.

6. The Holy Spirit's Word of Knowledge (12:8b)

Paul now discusses the manifestation of the Holy Spirit's word of knowledge. Verse 8b.

^{8b} and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

The “*word of knowledge*” is grounded in God’s understanding. We all inhabit our own worlds with incomplete knowledge. However, this “*word of knowledge*” is not fragmented; it provides complete insight that flows through our lips from the all-knowing Holy Spirit for the edification of others. “Knowledge” differs from “wisdom.” Knowledge encompasses information, data, familiarity, and experience; these are only as reliable as the latest history, research, and developments in the world. But when the Holy Spirit imparts a “*word of knowledge*” through your lips to someone in need, it is divine and perfect. If a saint draws from the knowledge he has acquired from data and facts, it remains incomplete and flawed in many ways. It is not so with the “*word of knowledge*” from the Holy Spirit. While wisdom is the application of truth, knowledge pertains to the application of understanding.

Here is an example of a “*word of knowledge*” from the Holy Spirit. Dr. Skip Smith was a wonderful friend with whom I served for many years. I did not meet him until he was in his mid-70s, but I had the privilege of knowing him until he passed away in his mid-90s. Dr. Skip hosted a regular radio program on KHCB in Houston for nearly 50 years. After each program, his phone would start ringing in his office with needs and concerns about the message he had just delivered. I was honored that every Sunday, he would stop by my class to pick up a set of notes for that day. Depending on who was preaching, if it was anyone other than Dr. John Morgan, Dr. Skip would read my lesson instead of listening to the sermon. Now, Dr. Skip was quite the talker. If you asked him a question, you might as well settle into a comfortable chair because his answers tended to go on for quite a while. After about a year together, I discovered that the most profound things he would say were never direct responses to my questions. They were his reactions to my statements. Oddly enough, the profound comments that impacted me the most were never in response to something I was trying to elicit. I must admit, I made numerous attempts to provoke profound reactions with well-thought-out statements, yet his responses to those were never deep. Strangely, when a truly profound statement occurred, I never heard him repeat it. That struck me as odd. He had a number of favorite sayings that drove me a bit crazy because he used them so frequently. One day, he found me with my head on my desk, praying. He stepped into the room and shut the door.

“Dr. Jim, may I assist you with your prayers?” “Oh, Skip, I’m in a quandary. This member keeps scheduling appointments for my counsel, and I’m just not equipped to provide direction.” I began to share the details without revealing the name. After one of my startling details, he remarked, “Sounds like demon possession.” Then he went on to discuss other unrelated topics, which I had to listen to for about an hour. It was his time to talk about himself. I believe the phrase, “Sounds like demon possession,” was a “*word of wisdom*” from the Holy Spirit through Dr. Skip’s lips.

The next time the individual came to an appointment at my office, I asked, “Is Jesus your Savior?” Her head dropped, and her eyes stared at me with anger and hatred, unleashing the foulest things I have ever heard about Jesus from her lips. When the words finally ceased, I said, “Would you like to invite Jesus to be your LORD and Savior?” I wish I could tell you that salvation occurred that day, but it did not. I didn’t see the individual again until her family contacted me a year later to conduct the funeral. It was a challenging funeral—my first as a 36-year-old minister, presiding over the final service of someone who was lost. It wouldn’t be my last. Nor would it be the last “*word of knowledge*” I would hear from the lips of Dr. Leroy (Skip) Smith.

This manifestation of the Holy Spirit remains vibrant in the lives of the saints whom the Holy Spirit has chosen to use.

7. The Holy Spirit's Faith (12:9a)

Paul discusses the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in a saint's life in verse 9.

⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit,

"Faith" comes from the Greek word *peitho*. It signifies the ability to persuasively share the gospel with others, guiding them toward a saving relationship with the LORD. Faith is always bestowed by the Holy Spirit, never through an individual. For the saint, faith is "the Holy Spirit's divine persuasion," setting it apart from mere human belief (confidence). This faith is not what is typically associated with salvation. Instead, it arises from the Holy Spirit during trials, challenges, or situations that demand complete reliance on God. This manifestation enables a believer to inspire others, encouraging them to trust in God for the impossible and to witness unexpected outcomes. It is not a gift that a saint can wield at their discretion. Rather, it is a movement of the Holy Spirit within a saint, prompting them to step forward and lead the hopeless into hope.

I witnessed this unexpected manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Dr. John Morgan time and again, but not in the way one might expect. Yes, when he stood to preach, people were saved. That was the office of evangelism bestowed upon him by the LORD as a gift to the Church (Ephesians 4). What many never noticed was the Holy Spirit's manifestation of faith through his life in office administration, away from the congregation's view. The Church was continually expanding. When I arrived in 1990, the Church membership was just over 5,000. However, over the next 29 years of his pastoral ministry, we needed new buildings to accommodate the growing numbers. By the end of his ministry, the Church membership had reached approximately 21,000 living souls. I mention this because we officiated at more than 12,000 funerals, baptized over 16,000 individuals, and received, through baptism or transfer from other Churches, more than 56,000 during his 53 years as pastor. Around 1976, Dr. John decided that the Church would be debt-free. This decision meant that we would never borrow money from banks when constructing new buildings. We had to ensure that the funds were available before breaking ground. As financial deadlines approached, our finance administrators would often wring their hands in doubt about whether the money would come through. Dr. John never faltered. They would come up with schemes to raise funds, but he never took the bait. He prayed, and the LORD provided guidance on what to do. The manifestation of faith through the Holy Spirit in his leadership never failed. The funds were always available when it was time to write the check.

This manifestation of the Holy Spirit remains vibrant in the lives of the saints whom the Holy Spirit has chosen to work with.