**I believe in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:1-11) by Daniel.**

The topic of the HolySpirit has been a very problematic one for the church particularly since the arrival of the Pentecostal movement in the 19th century.

With very little said about the Holy Spirit in the Creeds, it does seem that it was not as problematic as the other two persons of the Trinity.

And yet today, we agree quite a lot on the Father and the Son, and differ very significantly on the person of the Spirit.

Now if I was to choose a passage to preach about, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” I would not have chosen this passage because it is just one of those where Christians who value the Bible disagree vastly. It has just struck me as I prepared that some of the theologians I admire very much would actually take a different view from mine on the whole issue of spiritual gifts. Praise God we are in a church that accepts both sides.

What I’m not going to do this morning is to convince you about Spiritual gifts; and rather stick to our topic, what do we mean when we say- I believe in the Holy Spirit from this passage.

The context is that the Corinthian church is a church that is riddled with division and self interest- on many fronts. This passage falls on a section where Paul is addressing issues pertaining the church and worship: the pastor’s salary in ch.9, The Lord’s supper in ch.10, the role of women in the church in ch.11 and now about spiritual matters. All very problematic issues even today, 2000yrs down the line.

*v.1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.*

The word gifts there is inferred from the context, the original simply says “spiritual.” ESV gives an option of spiritual persons, other translations simply say “spiritual things/matters”. It’s basically the Spirit side of things, and that’s why this passage is relevant for our topic, I believe in the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to be a Spirit person, or Spirit Christian?

**1. The Mark of the Holy Spirit**

Corinth was a very religiously pluralistic society with an abundance of Greek mystery religions. In these religions, like many today, the concept of being a spiritual person was not foreign: and it was characterized by various forms of spiritual experiences: trance, ecstasy, frenzy, engagement with demonic forces, emotionalism, intellectualism sometimes and all sorts of strange experiences. That was the mark that you were a spiritual person.

The Corinthian church, was a church that experienced some of these things so that later Paul would call them out to be orderly. It was probably a mess.

For the Corinthians, the mark of believing in the Holy Spirit was that you had some of these experiences. The more uncontrollable and disorderly you were, the more Spirit you had. The more ecstatic the better.

And Paul basically tells them, that’s pagan! You are importing a pagan mentality into the church.

*v.2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led.*

They had no control. But that’s not what being spiritual is.

*v.3 Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.*

Do you see that Paul is saying, that actually, to be in the Spirit is to be able to say Jesus is Lord.

And that’s true from other passages. So when Jesus promises the Holy Spirit, in John 14-16, he says the Holy Spirit will glorify him. The work of the Spirit is to point to Jesus; to glorify Jesus, to remind us of Jesus teaching. He is always shining the spotlight, not on himself but on Jesus.

I recently had a conversation with someone who remarked that we really don’t speak of the Holy Spirit much. And that’s true I guess. But you see, the Holy Spirit doesn’t want us to talk about him as much as he wants us to talk about the Son and the Father.

And do you see therefore, that every genuine Christian, one who can say Jesus is Lord has the Holy Spirit.

*V.13 For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body-Jews or Greeks, slaves or free- and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

Do you see that it is all, irrespective of ethnicity or status- of those baptized into one body (all members of the Church) were made to drink of the one Spirit. We are filled with the Spirit.

And so you can confidently say I believe in the Spirit, I am filled with Spirit if the Lordship over Jesus is a reality in your life.

**2. The gifts of the Spirit**

The emphasis here is the diversity of gifts:

*v. 4 varieties of gifts, same Spirit*

*v.5 varieties of service, same Lord*

*v.6 varieties of activities, same God.*

Did you notice the Trinity? Spirit, Lord (Jesus), and God. Three persons but one God. They are not one, they are different- but have complementary functions.

And thus the Trinity, which is unity in diversity: inspires gifts that diverse and yet one.

Variety of gifts. I think of gifts simply as abilities: I have the Spirit given ability to speak, and don’t have a Spirit given ability to sing for example. He gives a list of them in v.8-10 which is by no means exlusive. Towards the end of the chapter he gives another list; and he gives other lists in various other letters: Romans, Ephesians, 1 Peter.

We must have a broad view of gifts; these lists are only representative. But what strikes me most is some of the things in those lists: v.28 talks about the gift of helping or the gift of administration, or gift of giving in Romans.

Variety of service: from the word diakonia has the sense of waiting tables. That’s what ministry is: waiting tables. Service. It’s not about status, it is about function.

And I think we sometimes spend a lot of time asking ourselves, what is my gift? And I think that’s not the only approach.

The better question to ask is always, what needs doing. Where is there a gap to be filled. And that’s one of the beautiful things I have enjoyed seeing work in this congregation. I know and have heard of several people who arrived and by the 2nd or 3rd Sunday they are doing something.

Are we looking for opportunities to serve? That’s part of believing in the Holy Spirit. Variety of service.

Lastly, variety of activities and the word activities is the word we get our English word energy from. We have different energies, activities. Some will be upfront, others will be behind the scenes. Some will need years of learning and working hard at. Others will be quicker.

You see, the Spirit does not inspire us to be clones of each other. My experience is and should not necessarily be your experience. And yet in all our diversity,

*v.11- it is the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one as he determines.*

The last emphasis is in v.7

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

Two things there,

First, everyone is given the manifestation of Spirit. It’s an interesting word there he uses: manifestation.

This is a bad illustration especially now when cases of teenage pregnancy has gone very high in Kenya. But as teenagers, I remembered the girls being warned of the futility of trying to hide a pregnancy-which is dangerous for them. Sooner or later it will manifest.

If we have the Spirit, it will show. It will manifest. And this manifestation is given to each one: the gifts, service and activities.

Second, this manifestation is for the common good. You see the gifts of the Spirit are never for personal fulfilment, or a means of pursuing personal significance and value. And I think there’s just a sense in a society that we are so obsessed with self. The church can become an arena for displaying our talents: a stage to perform . That’s not Spirit filled.

The gifts of the Spirit is for the common good. The gift is for the church. The church determines how they use it. It doesn’t matter how I subjectively feel gifted, the person who decides that is the brothers and sisters. The gift is for them. What I can do is go out of my way to serve others..

As I finish, a representation of the gifts he mentions:

A message of wisdom –probably in the PCC or an email to Alan. That’s a gift.

A message of Knowledge.

Faith. Obviously every Christian has faith, but there would be those amidst us who are particularly gifted to say- why don’t we trust God about this in a way that not all of us can.

Healings. I doubt it means someone who will go out healing people as much as that amidst us there are those who will benefit from healing. Not all of us will, and some may die. But there are those God might heal.

Miraculous powers, prophecy (not necessarily foretelling but also forthtelling), discernment of spirits, again just those people who will help us say- I’m not sure about this. And then tongues.

Again I don’t see anywhere in the New Testament that suggests these have ceased and yet there is nowhere that suggests that we should expect them in the same way. More importantly, there are a variety of gifts, not just these.

Now as Paul wrestles with this issue, if we read this passage in context, then we know that there is a melodic line, a background music in this part of the letter: love.

The well know 1 Cor 13 on love is actually in the context of spiritual gifts. In Galatians he talks about the fruit of the Spirit and headlines that with love

To believe in the Holy Spirit is to live under the Lordship of Jesus and to use one’s gifts to serve others by the Spirit’s help out of love.