

Power and Spirituality Considered

1 Corinthians 14: 1-4.

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"Follow after love, and be emulous of spiritual (manifestations), but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaks with a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one hears; but in spirit he speaks mysteries. But he that prophesies speaks to men (in) edification, and encouragement, and consolation" (1 Corinthians 14: 1-4 N. Tr.).

It is evident that "power" — even supernatural power — is distinct from spirituality. The spiritual condition of the christian company at Corinth was at a very low ebb, yet we read of them, "Ye are enriched by Him (Jesus Christ) in all utterance; and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; so that ye come behind in no gift (charismati); waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1: 5-7). Yet, this being so, it had been reported that there were contentions among them (1 Cor. 1, 2).

Twice over they were exhorted to, "Glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1: 31) and, "Let no man glory in men" (1 Cor. 3: 21). The apostle judged them as being carnal (1 Cor. 3: 1). "There is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men (according to man)?" (1 Cor. 3: 3). They gloried as though what they had received from God had emanated from themselves (1 Cor. 4: 7). "Now some are puffed up" (1 Cor. 4: 18); also it was commonly reported that there was unjudged fornication among them (1 Cor. 5: 1).

Brother was going to law with brother and that before unbelievers (1 Cor. 6: 6). They did wrong and defrauded their brethren (1 Cor. 6: 8). There was moral evil, distinct from and additional to that which is named in 1 Cor. 6: 18. Nor do we have to read far before we conclude that liberty was being abused and brethren sinned against. Five evils are listed in 1 Cor. 10: 6-11. In 1 Cor. 11: 16 there was contention against God's order in the creature realm; and in verses 20 to 34 the Lord's Supper was being treated in a disorderly fashion.

All these evils and yet an exercise of gift — especially the gift of tongues. Let us beware of, and eschew, that which makes man prominent. Edifying gift in its exercise gives prominence to Christ. It is one of the functions of the Spirit's ministry to glorify Christ (please read the words of our Lord as to this in John 16: 13-15). We conclude, therefore, that the exercise of power among the saints of God, as and when gathered to the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not necessarily an evidence of spirituality.