

# ONE AND THE SAME SPIRIT

## SUMMARY

- Unity in diversity – including obstacles
- The “controversial gifts”
- A response of integrity – eagerly desiring, handling Scripturally

## UNITY IN DIVERSITY

- Paul anchors his argument in the Trinity – this is not simply human pragmatism, but theological truth. Trinity – one God, but also three persons. Diverse and yet utterly unified.
- What is this unity? What is it not?
  - Not tolerance *in spite of* diversity (“we put up with each other even though we’re all different”).
  - Not doctrinal diversity – there are passages about matters of conscience earlier in the letter, and in Romans
  - Not diversity of thinking about whether others’ gifts have value – it’s freedom to have different gifts, not freedom to look down on others. For instance:
    - Administrative gifts = unspiritual
    - Encouragement woolly and not very spiritual
    - Mercy-givers put down as being “gushy”
    - British cynicism: rise of faith for something = immature and naïve
- It’s intended to be a unity *because of* our diversity (“we need each other to be complete.”) – hence choice of image
  - Per the ESV study notes: “Therefore Paul wants the Corinthian church to understand how their unity can be enhanced by appreciating the variety of gifts God has given to them.”
  - But Paul acknowledges that people might feel that way – either “I don’t need you” or “I don’t belong”.
- It’s also the kind of diversity that cries out for more breadth. Naomi won’t examine you and say, “hey, you’ve got a great heart and healthy legs and kidneys – don’t worry about the rest!” Paul’s choice of picture points us *communally* to seek to have strength in as many areas of the Spirit’s working as we can.
- All this is consistent with the following chapter – the Giver is God, who is love, and all these gifts are to be exercised in love, seeking to build up the Body.

## THE “CONTROVERSIAL GIFTS”

- We might all have some maturing to do, but I doubt that there’s any controversy in saying that we should learn to appreciate and welcome people who are gifted in administration, faith, wisdom or leadership.
- But there’s more controversial gifts here – particularly prophecy and apostleship.
- As we’ve seen, it won’t do to simply tolerate each other, or to fall out with each other, or to steamroller each other.
  - Tolerance isn’t co-operation, and we need the body parts to co-operate.
  - Jack BoCo on team unity
- Already established that some differences are exaggerated by vocab and past experience.
- So – can we narrow the difference? Maybe we agree more than we thought?
  - Prophecy - what do we all agree on?
    - Prophecy is not Scripture (not always in NT, never now). Closed canon.
    - Not about God sometimes being God and other times a nice advisor – about reliability of transmission, completeness of revelation of God in Christ, God choosing to do things His way.
    - God is speaking to our community in diverse ways in addition to through the Scriptures (2 weeks ago)
    - I would call some of that prophecy – you might not. Either way, we’d do well to pay attention to it and to weigh it for its value. If we do call it prophecy, we have guidelines on how to use it.

- Apostleship
  - Title controversial, though common in many nations / cultures, esp. African ones
  - What do we agree on?
    - Nobody today has the honour that the Twelve had (original or 11+1) of being first-hand witnesses of Christ's earthly ministry.
    - Nobody's teaching today has the authority or infallibility of Scripture. But then again, that's not really a mark of an apostle.
    - But apostle = "sent one"; "send" = same word (e.g. 2 Tim 4:15) – everyday language back then
    - Some people today do have a call on their lives to pioneer a new Kingdom initiative, to plant churches. Probably agree that some people have a call to oversee and offer insight and correction to local churches within a network. Whether or not we call them apostles, we see this gift at work.

## A RESPONSE OF INTEGRITY – EAGERLY DESIRE, EMPLOY SCRIPTURALLY!

- Some gifts we have in abundance:
  - Nearly 1<sup>st</sup> XP of WCC = Jane's administration of interview day – not bureaucracy obstructing, but administration enabling
- Some we don't have at all:
  - I'd dearly love to see gifts of healing at work in our Church today, as they are in some places
  - Noting that we have seen some miraculous healings – but rarely with the immediate effect of Jesus's
- Some we have, but don't know what to do with them:
  - Prophecy, or the thing I described earlier if you don't want to call it prophecy – "here's how I believe God is leading me / us; here's something that's coming soon which God wants us to know; here's something we need to address in our midst because it's an issue"
  - E.g. Simon Jackman a few years ago; others in the fellowship too – not naming because I don't want to put people on the spot, but if we welcome their God-given insight, we'll see the quality of their gift (Matt 10:41)
  - Leads back to challenge from June 2019 – how can we receive these gifts as a church?
- Suggestion – eagerly desire, employ Scripturally
  - Eagerly desire – for ourselves and for the community. Even if you don't want a gift, ask God to give it to *us*.
  - Employ Scripturally – use gifts in the way we're told to. Weigh prophecies; for those who speak in tongues, do it in a way that builds up the body; ask people to lay hands and maybe anoint with oil when we pray for healing. Teach and encourage each other to use what we have in a way that builds up the church.
- There is a risk in "identifying our gifts" that we might become "us-centred" – or that we use our gifts as a cover for immature character – "this is just how I am". The antidote for that is to ensure that our focus is always on God's glory, and the strength and beauty of His bride, the Church!

## A RESPONSE

- I want to suggest that a fitting response to this message is to honour our Father by making a refreshed commitment to each other – a commitment to honour, nurture and receive the breadth of people and the breadth of gifting that He's put in our church.
- Jemima is going to introduce a song in a few minutes that is a sung response to this. We've had quite a few times recently where we've ended in "led prayer" – this time, I think we'll end with a "led song".