

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

Paul said, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord” (1 Cor 12:4–5). I praise you today as the God who gives spiritual gifts to your children. You want Christ’s body, the church, to be empowered for service, and the gifts you bestow enable me to play an important part in building your kingdom. How great and marvelous is your wisdom!

Today in Your Word

Today you shared with me more of Paul’s second letter to the church at Corinth (called 1 Corinthians). Having dealt with “food offered to idols,” Paul now addressed the issue of spiritual gifts in the church. The Corinthians had been blessed by a special outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit, but they did not understand how their gifts were supposed to complement each other and work together for the good of the church. Paul explained it to them in terms of four key concepts: (1) Unity: although there are many believers in the church, we are all united into one spiritual body by virtue of being in Christ. (2) Interdependence: each believer in the church belongs to the other believers. No one can survive on their own, for we all need each other. (3) Diversity: believers in the church do not all have the same spiritual gift, for if they did, where would the body of Christ be? (4) Purpose: the Spirit gives gifts to each believer so that the body of Christ might be fully equipped for the work of the ministry. This teaches me not to look down on other believers just because they don’t have the same gift I do. Each gift is necessary to the body, and the believers I may think of as less honorable should be treated with special honor and dignity (1 Cor 12:22–23). Above all, Paul wanted the Corinthians to use their gifts in a spirit of love. Love was the glue that bound them together, and love had to be present if their gifts were to make a difference in the church and the world. Paul’s comments on love are both inspiring and challenging, and they teach me a lot about what it means to love others. If I love others: (1) I will be patient and kind, not envying what they have or boasting about what I have. (2) I won’t be condescending or rude, and if things don’t go my way, I won’t be resentful or angry. (3) I will never condone wrongdoing, but rather affirm and rejoice in the truth. (4) I will bear, believe, hope and endure all things, and when I feel like I’ve gone the extra mile, I will keep going. (Father, help me to live this way!) Paul concluded his discussion of spiritual gifts by emphasizing the importance of edification—building others up in the faith. He did this by contrasting the gift of tongues (various languages) with the gift of prophecy (telling forth the truth). Paul said, “If I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?” (1 Cor 14:6). His point was that unless the tongue was interpreted, nobody would understand what was being said. Thus it was better to “speak five words” that could be understood than “ten thousand words in a tongue.” This teaches me that although every gift is useful, the “greater” gifts are those which edify the whole body (1 Cor 14:5). When I use my gift, my focus should be on helping others, not pleasing or glorifying myself. As Paul said, “Let all things be done for building up” (1 Cor 14:26).

Reflection

Today’s reading really challenges my view of and approach to church. When I gather together with my fellow believers, are my efforts focused on building them up or on what I can get out of the service?

Request

Father, give me a heart of love for my fellow believers! Help me to be concerned about their welfare and burdened for their faith. May I always be patient and kind, forgiving them as you have forgiven me.

Thanksgiving

Thank you for giving me a spiritual gift that can be used to glorify you and edify your church. How wonderful to be a part of what you are doing to build the kingdom of Jesus Christ!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “[Though Perfect Eloquence Adorned](#)” – Thomas Randall.

Meditation Verse: 1 Corinthians 13:4–6.