

1 Cor. 12:1-3 "In the Spirit"

For the Children: Some boys and girls are good at acting. They can act unafraid, even when they are scared inside. They can act like they know the answers when they really do not. They can act like a good child of God when they are really behaving in a very sinful way. Adults often act like this, too. They often pretend to be better Christians than they are. The Bible tells us a lot about what we should be thinking, saying and doing – and how we should be speaking and behaving. That is the kind of life the Lord helps us to make a start in living. He does so by sending His Holy Spirit to live in us. The Holy Spirit helps us to judge what we think, say and do by God's Word; and by whether we are honouring the Lord Jesus. **Questions:** What was the non-Christian life like in Corinth? How is the Christian life different? Why should we not be proud about our way of living?

Introduction:

First Point: Life Without the Spirit

- 1) The Pagan Life: Men are always led by someone, for good or ill. The apostle uses 2 words to describe the pagan life of the largely Gentile Corinthians, before their conversion. Both words translate "led" (v. 2). The first means to be led astray – with a suggestion of it being by seduction; the other means being led in a more coercive way. They were carried away by ungodly impulses and controlled by Satan. As a result, they were previously helpless. The result was they were led to idolatry, evil and alienation from God.
- 2) Dumb Idols: The idols to which they had been led were lifeless and dumb. The idol-religions often involved ecstatic utterances – prophecies and speaking-in-tongues. Note the apostle's emphasis on "speaking" here (v. 3), since he has these ecstatic utterances in mind. But since the gods were dumb, these sounds were all meaningless and unintelligible. Some of the members of the Corinthian church were, perhaps, looking for a similar experience as Christians.
- 3) A Strong Contrast: The indwelling and the gifts of the Spirit should not be judged by the standards of the un-spiritual life. The life of the ungodly is one of ignorance, lies, irrationalism and control of the devil. The gifts of the Spirit should not be confused with that which is dumb and unintelligible. The devil is always trying to get his victims to curse Christ, rather than to confess Him. Alleged prophecies or tongues that are not of the Spirit will partake of this demonic character. That does not mean that all who speak in tongues etc. today are possessed. But Satan will encourage and use even that which occurs as a psychological phenomenon.

Second Point: Life in the Spirit

- 1) What the Spirit Avoids: The Holy Spirit does not produce that which is uncontrolled, unintelligible, or careless. He does not promote that which is doctrinally unsound or blasphemous. He does not lead anyone to say, "Jesus is accursed." Nor does the Spirit encourage a lifestyle that blasphemes the Name of the Lord.
- 2) What the Spirit Enables: Thoughts, words and deeds that arise from the indwelling of the Spirit and His gifts are rational, intelligible and careful – in order to edify the speaker and the hearer, and to bring glory to the Lord. He enables people to say, "Jesus is *Lord*." Behind that lies the understanding of Biblical truth about Jesus – that He is God, man, Saviour, and Lord of all. Spirit-filled Christians are governed by the content of the Word, as well as the Spirit. Their life is Christ-centred and Spirit-controlled. The claim to speak from God had to be judged by these standards at that time. Today, we judge that new extraordinary verbal communication from God has ceased. But anyone who claims to speak from the Bible must be judged by the Bible, and by what it says about the manner of life the Spirit-filled person should be living.
- 3) Avoiding Pride: Since true speech arises from the Spirit, no one uttering prophecies or speaking in tongues at that time had any reason for pride. Those evaluating the claims of those who were speaking in tongues etc. also had to humble themselves – by judging according to God's Word and submitting to that which genuinely came from Him. Feeling superior to others is not a mark of being filled with the Spirit!

Conclusion:

