

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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## Inworkings of Powerful-Acts

by Dan Trygg

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of servings, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of in-workings, but the same God, the One in-working all things in all persons. But to each one is given the disclosure of the Spirit for the common good ('carrying together'). For, on the one hand, to one is given a word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to a different person a faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healings by the one Spirit, and to another in-workings of powerful-acts [*dunamis*], and to another a prophetic-utterance, and to another distinguishings of spirits, to a different person kinds of tongues, and to another an interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit in-works all these things, distributing to each one individually according as He intends."

I Corinthians 12:4-11

"Men, Israelites, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested from God to y'all by miracles [*dunamis*], and wonders, and signs which God did by means of Him in your midst, as you yourselves have observed...."

Acts. 2:22

"Therefore, the one supplying to y'all the Spirit and inworking miracles [*dunamis*] among y'all, is it out from works of law, or out from a hearing of faith?"

Galatians 3:5

The Greek word, *dunamis*, is the word usually translated as "miracle" in most English versions. It occurs some 119 times in the NT (Matt 7:22; 11:20f, 23; 13:54, 58; 14:2; 22:29; 24:29f; 25:15; 26:64; Mark 5:30; 6:2, 5, 14; 9:1, 39; 12:24; 13:25f; 14:62; Luke 1:17, 35; 4:14, 36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1; 10:13, 19; 19:37; 21:26f; 22:69; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:22; 3:12; 4:7, 33; 6:8; 8:10, 13; 10:38; 19:11; Rom 1:4, 16, 20; 8:38; 9:17; 15:13, 19; 1 Cor 1:18, 24; 2:4f; 4:19f; 5:4; 6:14; 12:10, 28f; 14:11; 15:24, 43, 56; 2 Cor 1:8; 4:7; 6:7; 8:3; 12:9, 12; 13:4; Gal 3:5; Eph 1:19, 21; 3:7, 16, 20; Phil 3:10; Col 1:11, 29; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Thess 1:7, 11; 2:9; 2 Tim 1:7f; 3:5; Heb 1:3; 2:4; 6:5; 7:16; 11:11, 34; 1 Pet 1:5; 3:22; 2 Pet 1:3, 16; 2:11; Rev 1:16; 3:8; 4:11; 5:12; 7:12; 11:17; 12:10; 13:2; 15:8; 17:13; 18:3; 19:1). On 22 occasions the context definitely indicates that the writer is referring to some kind of *powerful act*, supernaturally wrought by God, and uses this word to "label it" (Matt. 7:22; 11:20,21,23; 13:54,58; 14:2; Mk. 6:2,5,14; 9:39; Lk. 10:13; 19:37; Acts 2:22; 8:13; 19:11; I Cor. 12:10,28,29; II Cor. 12:12; Gal. 3:5; Heb. 2:4). In other cases, the same word is used to describe the *power being operative to perform a healing, or a "wonder" or "sign"* (Mk. 5:30; Lk. 4:36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1; Acts 3:12; 4:7-10; 6:8; 10:38; Rom. 15:19; I Cor. 2:4,5[?]; I Thess. 1:5[?]; II Thess. 2:9). The context is clearly about miraculous acts of power, but this word describes the *power behind the event*, rather than the event itself. Of the remaining 85 times, the word can mean anything from "power, strength, might", referring to the potential energy which is able to accomplish a powerful, or effective result (e.g., Acts 1:8); ...to any "capability, capacity or ability" to do something (e.g., II Cor. 1:8; 8:3); ...to the "meaning or force" of a communication (e.g., I Cor. 14:11); ...or it can refer to earthly or heavenly "rulers or powers" (e.g., Rom. 8:38; Matt. 24:29).

As I mentioned above, there are two other Greek words used to describe miraculous acts: "**wonders**" and "**signs**". The word translated as "**wonders**" is from the Greek word *teras*. It occurs 16 times in the NT, is always plural, and always appears in tandem with the word for "signs" (Matt. 24:24; Mk. 13:22; Jn. 4:48; Acts 2:19,22,43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12; Rom. 15:19; II Cor. 12:12; II Thess. 2:9; Heb. 2:4). The word for "**sign**" is *sēmeion*, occurring 77 times in the NT. Of these, some 71 occurrences are in the context where a miraculous work is what is meant (Matt. 12:38,39; 16:1,4; 24:24; Mk. 8:11,12; 13:22; Lk. 11:16,29; 23:8; Jn. 2:11,18,23; 3:2; 4:48,54; 6:2,14,26,30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18,37; 20:30; Acts 2:19,22,43; 4:16,22,30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 8:6,13; 14:3; 15:12; Rom. 15:19; I Cor. 1:22; II Cor. 12:12; II Thess. 2:9; Heb. 2:4; Rev. 13:13,14; 16:14). The apostle John preferred this word, using it almost exclusively for miraculous works. He never used *dunamis* at all, and employs *teras* only once. In three NT passages, *dunamis* also is included along with these other two words in the same phrase, "miracles, signs, and wonders" (Acts 2:22; II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4). It is clear that these three different words are virtually interchangeable, in that they are all used for miraculous acts. Each is distinctive, however, in that each communicates a slightly different word picture focusing on a different aspect of the miraculous event. The word *dunamis* emphasizes the energy or power that performs the mighty act. The word *teras* describes the stunned amazement of those who witness the miracle, or its result. People are set back and marvel in wonderment at what has taken place. Finally, the word *sēmeion* draws the attention to the real point, "Who did this?" A sign points to something other than itself. It is an advertisement that tells us that something beyond human or natural means is at work in this situation. A miraculous sign is not necessarily of God, for the enemy can produce acts of power, wonders, and signs, as well. They do draw attention to the supernatural origin of the event, however.

The phrase, "inworkings of powerful-acts", which we find in I Cor. 12:10 is interesting. The word translated as "**inworking**" occurs in reference to miraculous acts in a couple of other passages (Matt. 14:2; Gal. 3:5). Other verbs used in association with the actual performance of miracles are "coming to be" or "happening" (Lk. 10:13); simply "doing" them (Acts 2:22); or "working [them] out" (II Cor 12:12). The thrust of the verbal form "**inworking**" (Gk. – *energeō*) is the focus upon the inner activity that ultimately is expressed in the outward act. God is stirring something inside which, when we respond to it, results in an expression (a "working out") of His power in a specific, supernatural event,

and a miracle "happens". We have seen that in several cases the power of the Holy Spirit was with Jesus to heal people. As He recognized what God wanted to do, He responded by going after what He perceived the Father was initiating (Jn. 5:19,20). Then God's Spirit came through Him to touch those He prayed for, and they experienced healing. You will also notice that I have rendered *dunamis* by the hyphenated phrase, "**powerful-acts**". **I have used this phrase to emphasize the outer-working of the inner-stirring of the Spirit, because a "miracle" is what transpires outside of the mind of the person, in actual, physical, time-space reality.** It would seem clear that Paul's intent here in I Cor. 12 was to ultimately lead toward that end result. The simple literal Greek, however, would be "inworkings of powers". With the NT background of the use of this word, understanding this to mean "miracles" would be the natural conclusion of seeing this phrase together, though this may be too narrow. Nevertheless, **Paul is using the word, "inworkings" to help us zero in on the inner process of what happens when we are being led by the Spirit to "do" a miracle.**

Remember, it seems that the gifts listed in I Cor. 12:7-11 are temporary, and available to *anyone* that God chooses to distribute them to. The way Paul writes about these gifts indicates that they are all "revelatory" in nature. In other words, God reveals to the person that He desires to use them to minister to someone else in accordance with an inner "disclosure" of the Holy Spirit. Again, we go back to Jesus' *modus operandi*, He did what He saw the Father doing, and He said what He perceived the Father saying to Him (Jn. 5:19,20,30; 7:16; 8:28; 12:49). Paul writes, "...there are varieties of inworkings, but the same God, the One inworking all things in every person. But to each one is given the disclosure of the Spirit toward the common good" (I Cor. 12:6,7). In the list that follows, note that only in regard to this gift is the word "inworkings" repeated. This could just be a literary coincidence, or it could be that Paul is trying to get us to focus in on this inner stirring as the *sign* or *indicator* of what God wants to do. **There are "inworkings", plural, which means that there is no single experience that everyone will have that will clue them into the fact that God wants to do a miracle.** Again, it is a "test-out-by-trial" proposition (Rom. 12:2). You must be open to the notion that God might want to do a miracle *today*, and that He might want to use *you* to do it, so that if that is indeed His plan, you will rise to the calling and prompting of God to do whatever He directs you to do.

As we saw above, there are over 100 times when miracles are mentioned in the NT. You certainly cannot read about the ministry of Jesus or of the early church and miss the significant role of miracles, healings, signs and wonders in the advance and effectiveness of the Gospel. **The apostles definitely saw the effectiveness of the miraculous in winning a hearing for the Word, and confirming its truthfulness. They expected God to confirm His Good News with accompanying signs and wonders** (Acts 4:29-31). And, why not? That certainly was their experience from the time Jesus began His ministry. **Furthermore, there is no indication in the NT that this was supposed to stop. It would seem as possible today as it was at that time.** There are two factors that would affect the availability of this expression of God's hand: (1.) If God, for some reason, should choose to no longer do such things; or, (2.) if people no longer were ready and responsive to God to be able to lay hold of His power. Since there is no clear revelation that God intended to stop doing miracles, and since they have happened throughout church history, and have accompanied revivals and upsurges of the activity of the Holy Spirit, **can we not conclude that the reason we do not see more miracles is probably the result of human failing, not of a Divine change of methods?** Could it be that we have stopped seeking them? Or, when God initiates them, could it be that we do not perceive accurately what He is doing, or what our response should be?

**How did the apostles learn to do miracles?** How did Paul learn? We know Jesus gave authority to the 12, and later to the 70, and that He Himself was their model (Lk. 9:1-6; 12:1-9). If Paul is writing about this as one of the giftings, temporary (I Cor. 12:10) or more permanent/habitual (I Cor. 12:28,29), that are given to the Body of Christ, then God continues to give the ability to do miracles today, both at various times and to particular people. **How will we learn to do miracles, if God wants us to?** Jesus told the apostles, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses..." (Acts 1:8). The verb in this verse is more likely to be understood as a middle voice, not as passive. What does that mean? Instead of the passive notion that power will "happen to us", the force of the middle is that you are intensely involved in the action and/or it deeply affects you as you do it. In other words, "you will (for yourselves) take/grasp/seize power (*dunamis*) when the Holy Spirit comes upon you." This sounds exactly like what Paul is describing in I Cor. 12. **We need to actively take and express the inworking-power of the Spirit when it comes, or nothing will happen.** I believe God will be prompting us in some way, concerning *how* we are to do this. *God* will reveal to us what to do. Either we will *sense something within ourselves*, or we will begin to *recognize God's activity in the other person*. We are to "do whatever we see the Father doing". Jesus said, "Whatever That One might be doing, these things the Son also does in like manner" (Jn. 5:19). God takes the lead, and we are to respond to what He is doing. **We are to watch for His activity, and join Him in what He is doing, and how He seems to be working.** God's ways are often different than what we might expect. We often miss what He wants us to do, because it is not what *we* would do. If we want God's power, we need to do things *His way, when* He wants to act.