

A Brief Lexical appraisal of the use of πνευματικῶν within 1 Cor 12:1

This is a sample study on the Greek words τῶν πνευματικῶν that Paul has employed in 1 Cor 12:1. Its main focus is to demonstrate (in part) that Paul did not specifically use our English term *spiritual gifts* and a more indepth study would demonstrate that he never used the term elsewhere.

The sample study is broken down into three parts, where Parts A & B were adapted from the [BibleWorks 9](#) program and Part C is a brief sample of some observations by prominent theologians. I have provided a sample of a chart that I am producing which shows how the translators of the NIV 2012 inserted our English word *gifts* as well.

Part A. How the various Bible translation committee's rendered τῶν πνευματικῶν into English.

GNT	1 Corinthians 12:1	Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν.	UBS Greek Text
BNT	1 Corinthians 12:1	Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν.	Nestle-Aland 27th Edition
BYZ	1 Corinthians 12:1	Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν.	Byzantine Text
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NASB	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now concerning spiritual <i>gifts</i> , brethren,	
NIV	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters,	
NIB	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now about spiritual gifts, brothers,	
CJB	1 Corinthians 12:1	But, brothers, I do not want you to go on being ignorant about the things of the Spirit.	
NRSV	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters,	
CSB	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now concerning what comes from the Spirit: brothers,	
DBY	1 Corinthians 12:1	But concerning spiritual <i>manifestations</i> , brethren,	
DRA	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now concerning spiritual things, my brethren,	
ESV	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers,	
CSBO	1 Corinthians 12:1	About matters of the spirit: brothers,	
ERV	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now concerning spiritual <i>gifts</i> , brethren,	
KJV	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now concerning spiritual <i>gifts</i> , brethren,	
NKJ	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now concerning spiritual <i>gifts</i> , brethren,	
NLT	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us.	
KJG	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now concerning spiritual <i>gifts</i> , brethren,	
MIT	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now, brothers, I do not want you to be unenlightened about spiritual manifestations.	
NAB	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now in regard to spiritual gifts, brothers,	
NABO	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now in regard to spiritual gifts, brothers,	
NET	1 Corinthians 12:1	With regard to spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters,	
NAS	1 Corinthians 12:1	Now concerning spiritual <i>gifts</i> , brethren,	
NJB	1 Corinthians 12:1	About the gifts of the Spirit, brothers,	

NIRV **1 Corinthians 12:1** Brothers and sisters, I want you to know about the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

RSV **1 Corinthians 12:1** Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren,

ASV **1 Corinthians 12:1** Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren,

PNT **1 Corinthians 12:1** Concernyng spirituall gyftes, brethren,

TNIV **1 Corinthians 12:1** Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters,

WEB **1 Corinthians 12:1** Now concerning spiritual {gifts}, brethren,

YLT **1 Corinthians 12:1** And concerning the spiritual things, brethren,

GNV **1 Corinthians 12:1** Now concerning spirituall giftes, brethren,

TNT **1 Corinthians 12:1** In spirituall thinges brethren I wolde not have you ignoraunt.

NOY **1 Corinthians 12:1** Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren,

Part B. Lexical Analysis: *BibleWorks 9*

Friberg Lexicon:

22291 πνευματικός, ἡ, ὅν spiritual, pertaining to the spirit, opposite *σαρκικός* (*fleshly, carnal*) and *σάρκινος* (*worldly, earthly*); (1) as distinguishing the nonmaterial from the material part of man; (2) predominately as distinguishing what belongs to the supernatural world from what belongs to the natural world (1C 15.44, 46); substantively ὁ π. *the spiritual person, the Spirit-filled person*, i.e. a person possessing and governed by the Spirit of God (1C 2.15); neuter plural τὰ πνευματικά *spiritual things or matters* (1C 9.11); *spiritual gifts or enablements* (1C 14.1); (3) as an adjective expressing the qualifying characteristic of impersonal things under the divine order *spiritual* (RO 7.14); (4) as an adjective denoting relationship to satanic forces; neuter plural τὰ πνευματικά τῆς πονηρίας as a substantive *spiritual forces of evil, supernatural evil powers* (EP 6.12)

UBS Lexicon:

4933 πνευματικός, ἡ, ὅν spiritual, pertaining to the spirit; spiritual person; spiritual thing, spiritual gift; supernatural or spiritual (1 Cor 10.3, 4); τὰ π. τῆς πονηρίας evil spiritual forces (Eph 6.12)

Louw-Nida Lexicon:

12.21 πνευματικός, ἡ, ὅν; πνευματικῶς: (derivatives of πνεῦμα 'Spirit,' 12.18) pertaining to being derived from or being about the Spirit - 'spiritual, from the Spirit' (in reference to such matters as gifts, benefits, teachings, blessings, and religious songs). πνευματικός: περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν 'brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts' or '... gifts which come from the Spirit' 1 Cor 12.1; πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες 'explaining spiritual truths to spiritual persons' 1 Cor 2.13. In 1 Cor 2.13 πνευματικά may perhaps be best rendered in some languages as 'truths revealed by the Spirit' or possibly 'truths about the Spirit.' Some persons would insist, however, that in 1 Cor 2.13 πνευματικά refers to teachings which are of particular benefit or relevance to people's spirits.

ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ 'who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing' or '... with every blessing which comes from the Spirit' Eph 1.3; ἵνα τι μεταδῶ χάρισμα ὑμῖν πνευματικὸν εἰς τὸ στηριχθῆναι ὑμᾶς 'in order to share a spiritual blessing with you to make you strong' Ro 1.11. The occurrence of πνευματικός in Eph 1.3 and Ro 1.11 could be understood as referring to the human spirit, but the contexts would seem to point more clearly to the involvement of the Spirit of God. See 26.10.

λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς ἐν ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς 'speak to one another in the words of psalms, hymns, and songs inspired by the Spirit' Eph 5.19. It is also possible that in Eph 5.19 πνευματικαῖς means merely 'spiritual,' and as such pertains to what is 'sacred' or 'religious.' One can, therefore, translate ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς as 'songs used in worship' or 'songs used in worship of God.' For a discussion of certain related problems involving the rendering of πνευματικός, see 26.10. πνευματικῶς: ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται 'because it is judged in terms of the Spirit' 1 Cor 2.14. The reference in 1 Cor 2.14 may be interpreted to mean that the unspiritual person cannot receive the gifts of the Spirit; neither can such a person understand them because

they can only be judged or evaluated on the basis of their being derived from the Spirit of God. For another interpretation of πνευματικῶς in 1 Cor 2.14, see 26.10.

EDNT Lexicon:

4241

πνευματικός, 3 pneumatikos **pertaining to the spirit, spiritual***

πνευματικῶς pneumatikōs **in a manner commensurate with the spirit, spiritually***

Bibliography

Lit.: à πνεῦμα. See also: U. BROCKHAUS, *Charisma und Amt* (1972). — H. CONZELMANN, *TDNT* IX, 402-6. — R. JEWETT, *Paul's Anthropological Terms* (1970). — E. KÄSEMANN, "1Kor 2,6-16," *idem, Versuche* I, 267-76. — R. MORISSETTE, "L'antithèse entre le 'psychique' et le 'pneumatique' en I Corinthiens XV,44 à 46," *RevScRel* 46 (1972) 97-143. — U. WILCKENS, "Zu 1 Kor 2,1-16," *FS Dinkler* 501-37. — M. WINTER, *Pneumatiker und Psychiker in Korinth* (1975).

1. The adj. derived from à πνεῦμα with the basic meaning *concerning the wind (the air), after the manner of the wind* (thus throughout secular Greek) occurs 28 times in the NT; the adv. occurs in 1 Cor 2:14; Rev 11:8. They are always used metaphorically (as in the Apostolic Fathers; they do not occur in the LXX). In Eph 6:12 the pl. of the adj. is used of "the *spirit hosts* of wickedness" (à πνεῦμα 2.c). Otherwise πνευματικός always means *pertaining to the spirit, spiritual* (à πνεῦμα 3; the tr. *spiritual* can mislead one into misunderstandings, such as "concerning reason," "religious," and that which is opposed to "corporeal").

2. In 1 Cor 12:1 (περὶ τῶν πνευματικῶν; cf. 14:1) Paul employs an already current designation for the ecstatic phenomena experienced in the Church, which were considered *effects* or *gifts of the Spirit* (à πνεῦμα 3.a) and desirable à χάρισμα. Whoever had access to these was considered to be a person *with spiritual gifts* (πνευματικός in the sense of the ecstatics, 14:37). Using a turn of phrase derived from this, Col 3:16 and Eph 5:19 speak of "*spiritual* songs," meaning not only ecstatic, but Spirit-induced and Spirit-imparting psalms in general (cf. Col 1:9 on *spiritual* wisdom and insight).

The spirit-effected capacity for special knowledge characterizes the difference between *spiritual* (1 Cor 2:13-15) and purely secular people (à ψυχικός); the latter are incapable of understanding *spiritual things* (2:13; cf. v. 12: "the gifts bestowed on us by God's Spirit"). The former can be judged only *spiritually* (aided by the Spirit, in a spiritual way, 2:14; a later development of this manner of expression is the use of the adv. in the sense of *commensurate with Spirit-effected* [prophetic] *interpretation* [Rev 11:8]). According to Paul, all Christians are spiritual, even if they behave "in the manner of the flesh" (à σαρκινός) and like "babes" (1 Cor 3:1) and not like "complete, mature adults" (à τέλειος; cf. also Gal 6:1).

The differentiation of spiritual people and secular people is characterized not least by reflection on the pneumatic existence of the resurrected Christ, an existence different from fleshly, earthly existence (cf. Rom 1:3f.; 1 Pet 3:18; 1 Tim 3:16). This is also the source of the new interpretation in 1 Cor 15:44-46 of the Jewish exegesis of Gen 2:7 that sets over against the earthly body a σῶμα πνευματικός, a "*spirit-body*" belonging to the realm of God's Spirit and created by God (on the derivation from Gnosticism cf. Winter [bibliography]; recently, however, Wilckens).

Analogously Paul can in typological exegesis (1 Cor 10:3f.) speak of the gifts of the wilderness wanderings, because of their orientation toward participation in the Spirit of the resurrected Christ, as "*spiritual* food" and "*spiritual* drink" (perhaps already as in *Did.* 10:3 a designation for the eucharistic gifts: H. Conzelmann, *1 Cor* [Hermeneia] ad loc.) and can call Christ the "*spiritual* rock."

In that the realm of the eschatological, vital πνεῦμα stands opposed to that of the flesh (à σὰρξ), the νόμος of the Old Covenant is according to Rom 7:14 also *spiritual* (this does not refer to the νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς mentioned in 8:2). Paul can thus impart "a *spiritual* gift" (Rom 1:11; here probably not in the sense of charisma: so E. Käsemann, *Rom* [Eng. tr., 1980] ad loc.; *contra* Brockhaus 130ff.; cf. Rom 15:27; 1 Cor 9:11 regarding the gift of the gospel).

According to the liturgically influenced triadic formula in Eph 1:3 God blesses us "with every *spiritual* blessing . . . in Christ" (cf. Gen 49:25), i.e., through Christ God gives to us who already belong to the heavenly world (cf. Eph 2:6) his *Spirit* as the fullness of that which we hope for from the blessing of God (cf. 1:13). The Church is called as a "*spiritual* house" to offer "*spiritual* sacrifices" (a metaphor for Christian life; 1 Pet 2:5a, b).

5219 πνευματικός

πνευματικός, ἡ, ὅν *pertaining to the spirit, spiritual*—**1.** *caused by or filled with the (divine) Spirit, pertaining or corresponding to the (divine) Spirit*—**a.** as adj. Ro 1:11; 7:14; 1 Cor 10:3f; 15:44; Eph 1:3; 5:19; Col 1:9; 3:16; 1 Pt 2:5. ὁ πνευματικός (ἄνθρωπος) in 1 Cor 2:15 means *the spiritual person*, whose powers of judgment are directed by the divine πνεῦμα. Cf. also 1 Cor 15:47 v.l.—**b.** subst. τὰ πνευματικά *spiritual things or matters* Ro 15:27; 1 Cor 2:13; 9:11; 15:46. *Spiritual gifts* 1 Cor 12:1; 14:1. ὁ πνευματικός *the one who possesses the Spirit* 1 Cor 3:1; 14:37; Gal 6:1.—**2.** *pertaining to (evil) spirits* subst. *spirit-forces* Eph 6:12.* [*pneumatic*] [pg 162]

Part C. Commentary on First Corinthians 12:1 Pneumatikos

(1884) Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Corinthians*, p.275

..... The πνευματικά are in their nature the same as the χαρίσματα, ver. 4. Other interpreters make it *masculine* (Grotius, Hammond, Clericus, Locke, Semler, Morus, Rosenmttler, Stolz, Heydenreich, Ewald, Hofmann, also David Schulz, *d. Geistesgaben der ersten Christen*, p. 163 ; and Hilgenfeld, *die Glossolalie*, 1850, p. 16) : “ *concerning the inspired*, whether genuine or not ; Ewald renders : “ *concerning the men of the Spirit* ” (speakers with tongues). But in xiv. 1 we have the theme recurring as τὰ πνευματικά. — οὐ θέλω ὑμ. ἀγνοεῖν] *I do not leave you in ignorance*. Comp. x. 1 ; 1 Thess, iv. 18. Theodore of Mopsuestia puts it aptly : θέλω ὑμᾶς καὶ τῶν πνευματικῶν χαρισμάτων εἰδέναι ὡς τὴν τάξιν, ὥστε βούλομαι τι καὶ περὶ τούτων εἰπεῖν.

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(1971) C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p.278

About spiritual gifts (ἡνυμφίαιKwv; the adjective may be neuter—spiritual gifts, cf. ix.11; xiv. 1; xv. 46; or masculine— spiritual persons, cf. ii. 15; iii. 1; xiv. 37; it seems impossible to find objective ground for a decision between the two possibilities, and little difference in sense is involved—spiritual persons are those who have spiritual gifts), brothers (cf. i. 1), I have no wish that you should remain in ignorance (a Pauline phrase; cf. x. 1).

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(1993) Simon Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, pp.412-13

The topic that Paul expounds in this chapter is spiritual gifts. The Greek adjective *pneumatikon* (spiritual) appears alone in the original text, so that we are compelled to add a word. We complete the thought not with the noun referring to persons (2:15; 3:1; 14:37), which some scholars prefer,^{1 2} but with the word *gifts* (compare 14:1). The Holy Spirit is the giver of these gifts, so that the translation *gifts from the Holy Spirit** is not only plausible but attractive. The Holy Spirit continues to provide believers with these gifts.

In a previous passage (see 1:7), Paul used a synonym for spiritual gifts when he wrote the Greek term *charisma* (gift; that is, gift of grace). We have the English derivative *charisma*, which refers to personal leadership ability. But in the present chapter the word *charisma* points to the activities of the Holy Spirit. This is evident when Paul enumerates, among others, the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, speaking in tongues and interpreting them (w. 4, 9, 28, 30, 31).

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(2000) Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp.909-10

The translation and meaning of τῶν πνευματικῶν is universally discussed. Since the genitive plural masculine and neuter share the same Greek ending, some understand the Greek to mean *spiritual persons* (modern writers from Heinrici and Weiss to Blomberg and Wire and earlier commentators from Grotius to Locke).¹⁶ Most interpreters, however, believe that the term denotes *spiritual gifts* (from Tertullian, Novatian, and Cyril of Jerusalem to Conzelmann, Senft, and Lang).¹⁷ This is adopted by AV/KJV, RSV, NRSV, JB, and NIV (cf. NJB, REB, *gifts of the Spirit*). The main argument for the latter view that the Greek “is to be taken in a neuter, not a masculine sense ... is clear from 14:1 and from the interchange with χαρίσματα.”¹⁸ Conzelmann further equates gifts with “ecstatic phenomena,” an interpretation which has been questioned by Gundry and recently attacked in detail by Forbes.¹⁹

A relatively wide range of writers conclude that it is “impossible to find objective ground for a decision between the two possibilities, and little difference in sense is involved — spiritual persons are those who have spiritual gifts.”

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(2014) Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp.637-68 See Fee, *1 Corinthians* (1987)

1 The new topic is marked both by the repeated “now about” (see on 7:1) and the vocative “brothers and sisters.”²⁹ The difficulty lies with the content of the topic, which may be either masculine (= “those who have the Spirit”) or neuter (= “Spirit giftings”). What favors the former³⁰ is Paul’s usage earlier (2:15; 3:1), and especially later (14:37), where he says rhetorically, “If anyone thinks they are *pneumatikos* [a person of the Spirit].”³¹ It would also fit well with the problem in Corinth as it has been reconstructed above, where the conflict with Paul is not simply over Spirit giftings as such but over the significance of the gift of tongues for “spiritual” life. On the other hand, the certain use of the neuter plural in the later imperative “Be zealous for *ta pneumatika*” (14:1), where it refers at least to prophecy and tongues, plus the overall argument that deals primarily with the manifestation of gifts in the church, not with individual spirituality, has caused most translations and commentators to opt for “gifts of the Spirit.”³²

One wonders, however, whether in this instance the options have not been narrowed too rigidly. Most likely the word here is neuter, as elsewhere (9:11 and 14:1); but the evidence from earlier in this letter (2:13-3:1) and from later letters (Gal. 6:1, Rom. 1:11), suggests that for Paul the primary focus of this adjective is on the Spirit. Paul’s immediate — and overall — concern has to do with what comes from “the Spirit of God” (v. 3).

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NIV EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE

NIV (1986)			NIV (2012) Text			Gift (42) Gifts (30) Gifted (1)			G/K Number	NDT	AIT	103	356	1443	1517	1390	1561	1431	1562	1432	1434	1564	1435	1797	1654	2330	2129	3167	28780	4461	4152	4735	4394	5921	5485	5922	5486			
			Mt 2 : 11	presented him with g of gold,					1565															X													δῶρον doron			
			Mt 5 : 23	you are offering your g at the altar and					1565															X													δῶρον doron			
				you are offering g there in front of the altar					1565																												δῶρον doron			
			12 : 29	God's g and his call are irrevocable					5922																												χάρισμα charisma			
			12 : 6	We have different g , according to the					5922																												X	χάρισμα charisma		
			6	If your g is prophesying, then prophesy					NDT	X																												-		
			1Co 1 : 7	you do not lack ⁵⁷²⁸ any spiritual g as you eagerly ⁵⁸⁷					5922																													X	χάρισμα charisma	
				wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed ⁶³⁷					5922																													X	χάρισμα charisma	
			7 : 7	But each of you has your own g from God ²⁵³⁶ :					5922																													X	χάρισμα charisma	
			7 : 7	from God; one has this ⁴⁰⁴⁸ g , another has that.					AIT																													-		
			12 : 1	Now about the g of the Spirit					4461																													πνευματικός pneumatikos		
			4	There are different kinds ¹³⁴⁸ of g , but the					5922																													X	χάρισμα charisma	
			9	to another g of healing by that one Spirit					5922																													X	χάρισμα charisma	
			28	then miracles ¹⁵³⁹ , then g of healing, of					5922																													X	χάρισμα charisma	
			28	of guidance					-																													-		
			30	Do all have g of healing? Do all speak in					5922																													X	χάρισμα charisma	
			31	Now eagerly desire ²⁴²⁰ the greater ³⁴⁸⁹ g .					5922																													X	χάρισμα charisma	
			13 : 2	If I have the g of prophecy and can fathom					4735																														προφητεία propheteian	
			14 : 1	of love and desire ²⁴²⁰ the g of the Spirit .					4461																													X	πνευματικός pneumatikos	
			12	Since you are eager ²⁴²¹ for g of the Spirit ⁴⁴⁶⁰ , try to					AIT		X																												-	
			12	excel in those					-																													-		
			37	a prophet or otherwise g by the Spirit ,					4461																													X	πνευματικός pneumatikos	
			16 : 3	send them with your g to Jerusalem.					5921																													X	χάρις charis	
			2Co 8 : 12	the g is acceptable according to what one					NDT	X																													-	
			20	of the way we administer this liberal g .					103			X																											ἀδρότης hadrotes	
			9 : 5	arrangements for the generous g you had					2330																														εὐλογία eulogia	
			5	That it will be generous g to the poor					2330																														X	εὐλογία eulogia
			4 : 10	should use whatever g you have received ³²⁶⁴					5922																													X	χάρισμα charisma	
			Rev 11 : 10	will celebrate by sending each other g ,					1565																														δῶρον doron	
			Rev 22 : 17	who wished take the free g of the water of life.					1562																														δωρεά dorea	