

"steer" (cf. Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17). This might be loosely connected to committees in our churches today.

h. Tongues. The last place is assigned this gift which the Corinthians and many today attach prime concern. The list given here is obviously hierarchical in character. Tongues is reduced to a minor emphasis with God for He is the One who sets the gifts! He also is the One who established the decreasing scale of importance.

3. AN INTERROGATION vv. 29, 30.

The point of these verses is simple. How did God set the gifts in the church? Did He give them to all? The Greek negative in all the questions requires a negative reply. God would not have one person with all gifts lest he feel self-sufficient. God so ordered the setting of gifts that the members of His body would need one another (cf. vv. 14-17). Each one, furthermore, is a contribution to the whole. Helps and governments are omitted from this series of questions suggesting their wide distribution. The idea of interpreting of tongues is added for clarity.

Conclusion What can be said for all of this? Certainly one item is sure. The Corinthians were well off base on their arrangement of spiritual gifts. They have their modern counterparts! It is best to seek the best gifts and if God does not provide these, manifest love through the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22). Oh, to know the Word and digest its every morsel! Amen.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

"Gifts by the Holy Spirit II"

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

Introduction

1. The Corinthians wanted to know about the matter of spiritual gifts (cf. 7:1 with 12:1). God always gives answers to honest questions. In simple and childlike trust, one must believe that what God says is true!

2. Having laid a sound foundation in the work of the Spirit and spiritual gifts, having shown that the human body is clearly filled with lessons parallel to the study of spiritual gifts, Paul moves right on into the core of his subject. It is all in answer to a question raised by the church at Corinth (cf. 7:1 with 12:1).

3. There are comments made by Paul at this juncture which point out the place of gifts in God's program. Careful study will yield great help from these important verses:

1. AN APPLICATION v. 27.

Paul has written at length about the human body. He has shown that it is a natural help in understanding the subject of "gifts." He moves on from that point:

a. An identification. The small phrase "ye are" shows that the Corinthians are to be involved in what he is writing. They are a part of the scheme he is constructing.

b. An appellation. The "body of Christ" is an arthrous. This points to the fact that the believers at Corinth are not "the" body of Christ, but "a body" which is locally found at this city.

c. A designation. God never loses sight of the individual. Hence, just like members in the human body, each one at Corinth has his own place and function in the body of Christ. The prepositional phrase used here subscribes to this.

2. AN ENUMERATION v. 28.

By a careful comparison of three sections where gifts are mentioned, it is worthy to note the triad of emphasis

provided: (1) In 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, the Holy Spirit is the Giver, the Christian is the receiver, and the ability is the gift. (2) In Ephesians 4:11, Christ is the Giver, the church of Christ is the receiver, and the believer is the gift. (3) In 1 Corinthians 12:28, the Father is the Giver, the church is the receiver, and the individuals function as the gift. The occupation of the Trinity in these matters is patent.

The verb "hath set" is a middle aorist (cf. v. 18) to show that all is a specific work of God here and with His personal interest at stake. It is a staggering thought to consider. If this is grasped, it is a short step to recognize the activity of the carnal flesh in much which flies under the banner of "gifts" today.

Paul commences to list the gifts in a simple enumeration, but alters this (under inspiration) to mark the notion of subordination. The liberty of the Corinthians has degenerated to a childish preference for tongues which was entirely unwarranted. Those involved in this same trap today would be wise to study this portion and see how it abolishes their contention.

The regimen "in the church" notes that the circle of God's concern is the invisible body of believers which is the church (Eph. 1:22, 23). The range is broader than the local effort in Corinth.

The enumeration stands in this fashion:

a. Apostles. The term "first" shows both dignity and time. Superiority outweighs anteriority. Technically, an apostle is defined in the Bible (Acts 1:15-26). Admittedly, every believer is a "sent one" (John 15:16), but this in no way eliminates the special use of the term. There is no apostolic succession and hence the gift was temporary. These served as the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) and were the special recipients of the "dispensation of grace" (Eph. 3:5).

b. Prophets. These are given the second place of superiority. They were to receive the messages from God through special revelation. The declaration of that message received corresponded to the inspiration of the written Word of God. It bore His authority. It is probably related

to the gifts of "word of wisdom and knowledge" (1 Cor. 12:8). It was generally bound to the gift of apostles and therefore is temporary. Both an apostle and prophet functioned in various assemblies (cf. Acts. 13:1; 15:32). With the completion of the Canon of Scripture, the need for this gift vanished.

c. Teachers. This is the didactic gift and functioned locally. The gift was linked with the care of souls, hence it fused with the pastorate (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 5:17). Normally it was found parochially (Acts 20:28). Its need persists.

d. Miracles. The Greek construction in enumeration is changed here. There is also a notable change from the concrete gift to the abstract. The original term used here means "powers" (cf. v. 10). It depicts the display of strength more than grace. The power authenticated the apostolic or prophetic gift (2 Cor. 12:12). It is a temporary gift. Although the gift is gone with the passing of the apostolate, miracles per se still are experienced sovereignly by the hand of God.

e. Healings. "Then" is used the second time here to deliberately show the order involved. This is probably an aspect of the gift of miracles. As earlier (v. 9), the word is prefaced by the Greek term "gift" to underscore the grace aspect to healings. The plural of the noun shows the wide range covered. Since it was associated with the apostolate, it is definitely a temporary gift. The miracle of healings, however, are yet experienced sovereignly. The rampage for prayer cloths, handkerchiefs, and other psychological stimuli are unworthy of Biblical soundness.

f. Helps. The movement down the scale of importance does not include another "then." The subordination becomes less distinct and this is a mode of showing it. The noun used here comes from a verb (cf. Luke 1:54) which strictly signifies "to take a burden on oneself" (middle voice) instead of another (so the prefixed preposition). It is a hapax legomenon. The gift is still functioning.

g. Governments. The notion of administration in external matters of the assembly is expressed here. The noun is only found here and comes from a verb meaning to