

The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

Gifted Men for the Common Good

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

1. **A Corporate Identity** (v.27)

The difficulties in the Corinthian church often surrounded individual divisiveness or desire for personal status in the church as was common in the larger culture. Paul has used the imagery of the body to describe all of those who are differently gifted by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-11) and who are united in Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-14). He now drives his point home by indicating that the Corinthian church is at the center of his illustration, and they should not miss these corrective instructions (cf. 2 Sam. 12:7). As he has before, Paul used the reality of who they are in Christ, a confessional and separate congregation of believers, in his appeal for them to live faithfully in the Lord (1 Cor. 3:9, 16-17; 5:7; 9:1).

2. **A Common Good** (vs.28-30)

In taking their focus off of themselves, the Corinthians were to remember that the gifts God has given to them were for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7) of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 11:18, 22; 14:4-5, 12). The complex nature of the body of Christ requires a diversity of gifts in accomplishing the good works that God has planned that believers are to do (cf. Eph 2:10).

- A. Apostles: An apostle is a messenger. There are several different uses of this designation (e.g. Acts 14:14; Gal. 1:17, 19; Phil 2:25; Heb. 3:1), but the primary concern is with the singularly unique office (cf. Acts 1:20) and gifting of apostles who were called by Jesus and tasked with being eyewitnesses of His resurrection (Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:15-26 26:15-18; 1 Cor. 9:1). This gifting and office, like prophecy, was for the establishing of the church (Eph. 2:20).
- B. Teachers: Teaching is not merely a matter of knowledge, organization, and presentation. God has blessed the church with teachers in order to fulfill His command (Eph. 4:11; cf. Matt 28:20; 2 Tim. 2:2).
- C. Helps: This is a gift that is tied in largely with meeting immediate needs (cf. Ps. 22:19) and may be connected with showing mercy (Rom. 12:8). In this way it is likely connected with function of deacons in the church (cf. Acts 6:1-4).
- D. Administrations: This word is related to navigating a vessel and indicates a wise guidance needful in directing the local church (Prov. 1:5; 11:14; 24:6).

3. **A Corrected Zeal** (v.31)

Paul does not want the Corinthians to have a lessened desire for the things of the Spirit. They are to correct their current attitude while redirecting their zeal (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1ff).