

I CORINTHIANS: HANDLING BELIEVERS' PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

XVI. God's Guidance On Spiritual Gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40

B. God's Purpose Of Mutual Edification In The Spiritual Gifts

(1 Corinthians 12:12-31)

I. Introduction

- A. The people Paul disciplined in Corinth lived in a city that was known for its immorality, alcoholism and worldly pursuits (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: The City of Corinth," p. 1619), so the formidable influence of the city's culture on the Corinthian believers left Paul addressing "(a)berrant beliefs and practices of an astonishing variety" in his letters to them, *Ibid*.
- B. However, in a vision Paul received from God as he ministered at Corinth in Acts 18:10b NIV, God told him, "I have many people in this city," so Paul was to keep on ministering regardless of the trials he faced there.
- C. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Paul taught God's purpose of providing mutual edification in the spiritual gifts in the Church, so we view this passage for insight, application, and edification (as follows):

II. God's Purpose Of Mutual Edification In The Spiritual Gifts, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

- A. 1 Corinthians 12:12 states the theme for the rest of the chapter, that just as the human body is one body, but it has many physical members that make up that body, and the various members work together as each one fulfills an important function for the entire body's benefit, so it is with the body of Christ in the local church.
- B. Paul explained this truth in greater detail in 1 Corinthians 12:13-31 as follows:
 - 1. At salvation, the Holy Spirit spiritually baptizes the believer into one body of Christ, be he Jew or Gentile, and be he bond or free, and all believers are made to partake of one Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:13.
 - 2. This body of Christ is composed of many parts, much like a human body, 1 Corinthians 12:14-20:
 - a. If the foot were to say that since it was not a hand that it was not part of the body, it would not for that reason not be a part of the body, 1 Corinthians 12:14-15 NIV.
 - b. If the ear were to say that since it was not the eye that it was not a part of the body, it would not for that reason not be a part of the body, 1 Corinthians 12:16 NIV.
 - c. Paul added that if the entire body were an eye, there would be no hearing, or if the whole body were hearing, there would be no smelling, the body would cease being a whole body, 1 Corinthians 12:17 NIV.
 - d. Accordingly, God has set the members of the spiritual body of Christ in the body as it has pleased Him to make the body of Christ a diversely equipped, functioning whole, 1 Corinthians 12:18-20 NIV.
 - 3. The various parts of the body of Christ work together with an interconnected, mutual dependency, each part contributing an important function for the whole much like a human body, 1 Corinthians 12:21-26:
 - a. In the human body, the eye cannot say to the hand that it had no need of the hand, nor again can the head tell the feet that it had no need of the feet, for those members of the human body that seem to be more feeble are necessary for the whole body, 1 Corinthians 12:21-22.
 - b. Similarly, in the body of the local church, upon the members who seem to be less honorable we bestow more honor, for the attractive parts have no need like the unattractive ones do, and God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to the part that lacked in order to avoid creating division in the body, but that all members should have the same care for one another, 1 Corinthians 12:23-25.
 - c. For this reason, if one member suffers, all the others suffer with him, or if one member is honored, all the others rejoice with him in unified, mutual edification, 1 Corinthians 12:26.
 - 4. Paul then described the gifted members of Christ's body in descending order of importance, 1 Corinthians 12:27-28: God has set in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, followed by miracle workers, gifts of healing, helps, administration, and diversities of tongues.
 - 5. In a series of rhetorical questions that expect a negative answer (by use of the negative particle *me* with the indicative mood of the verb, J. G. Machan, N. T. Grk. For Beg., 1966, p. 197; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 607), Paul taught that not all believers were gifted as apostles, or prophets, or teachers, or miracle workers, or healers, or speakers in tongues or interpreters of tongues, 1 Cor. 12:29-30. [Since not all believers in the Early Church spoke in tongues, that gift is not necessary for salvation as some claim!] Yet, they were to desire to have those in their local church who were the more important gifts of verse 28a, 1 Cor. 12:31.

Lesson: *Just as a human body's many parts are each needed by the entire body, so the church needs each member.*

Application: *May each of us believers use our spiritual gift to edify every other believer in the local church.*