

Sunday, September 24, 2017—I Corinthians 12:1-3 Now Concerning Spiritual Gifts

### **I Corinthians 12:1**

- **Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.**
- Recall from previous studies that we are in the section of I Corinthians where Paul is addressing their questions.
  - I Corinthians 7:1
- The next set of questions that Paul addresses pertains to the topic of spiritual gifts. Paul devotes chapters 12, 13, and 14 to answering their questions about this matter.
- Paul does not want them to be ignorant about this subject.
- During our study of chapter 1 we noted some things about the Corinthians and their relationship to spiritual gifts that it behooves us to review at this point in our study of the book.
- I Corinthians 1:5—before we go running off thinking that Paul is teaching that God “enriched” the Corinthians monetarily in Christ we need to look carefully at the verse.
- The Corinthians had been “enriched” by Christ “in all utterance,” and in “all knowledge.” So, their enrichment in Christ was in the specific categories of “utterance” and “knowledge.”
- Acts 2:4—the word “utterance” is used in connection with speaking in tongues.
  - I Corinthians 14:9
- I Corinthians 12:8—“word of knowledge” was one of the gifts that was being given during the formative stage of the dispensation of grace.
- I Corinthians 13:1-2—when Paul begins to address the function of spiritual gifts in the Corinthian church he specifically mentions “tongues” and “knowledge.”
- I Corinthians 1:7—that Paul is contextually talking about spiritual gifts in verse 5 is evident from verse 7, “so that ye come behind in no gift.”
  - II Corinthians 8:7
- I Corinthians 1:6—“Even” connects the beginning of verse 6 with the end of verse 5. So, the enrichment in “all utterance” and “all knowledge” that had been given to the Corinthians by Jesus Christ had something to do with the testimony of Christ being “confirmed” in the Corinthians.

- Within the context of 1 Corinthians 1 what “confirmed” the “testimony of Christ” in the Corinthians? It was the functioning of the gifts of tongues (“utterance”) and “knowledge” in verse 5.
- I Corinthians 14:22—tongues were for a sign. The Greek word translated “sign” in this verse is the word *sēmeion*. *Sēmeion* is variously rendered as sign (50x), miracle (23x), wonder (3x), and token (1x) by the King James translators. A sign is a miracle, wonder, or token that authenticates or confirms that a man and/or his message is from God.
- I Corinthians 1:22—the Jews required a sign. From the time God began dealing with Israel as a nation he did so in accordance with a program of signs.
  - Exodus 4:1-9
  - Deuteronomy 28:45-46
  - Luke 8:1-2
  - John 4:48
- I Corinthians 1:6—it was through the sign gifts of “utterance,” i.e., tongues and “knowledge” that the testimony of Christ was “confirmed” in the Corinthians.
- I Corinthians 1:7—verse 7 is a continuation of the same sentence that began in verse 4. Through this enrichment in “all utterance” and “all knowledge” that we saw in verse 5 the “testimony of Christ” was “confirmed” in them in verse 6, as a result in verse 7 the Corinthians find themselves a state where they “come behind in no gift.”
- In other words, there is no lack or wanting of spiritual gifts in Corinth. The phrase translated “come behind” comes from the Greek word *hystereō* which has a variety of meanings dealing with suffering from a lack or deprivation of some sort.
  - Matthew 19:20-21—“lack” and “lackest”
  - Luke 15:14—“want”
- I Corinthians 1:7—the Corinthians “come behind” or lack in no gift. There is not a spiritual gift that the Corinthians were found wanting or lacking with respect to.
- Why would that be the case? First, recall who requires a sign. The Jews (I Cor. 1:22).
- Acts 18:4-7—the Corinthian church met in a man’s house that joined hard to the synagogue. Therefore, the Corinthian church, perhaps more than any other, had a direct relationship and

interaction with Jewish people who all required a sign in order to believe. Therefore, it makes sense that the Corinthian church would “come behind in gift.”

- I Corinthians 12:1—so with all of that as background it makes sense that the Corinthians would have questions about the topic of spiritual gifts. Furthermore, given the Corinthians propensity to misunderstand and misbehave it makes sense that Paul would want them to understand what spiritual gifts were and how they were to function in the local church.

### **I Corinthians 12:2**

- **Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.**
- Many of the Corinthians had a past in the idolatrous religious practices of the Gentiles. In doing so they worshiped “dumb idols” i.e., idols that couldn’t hear, speak, or communicate.
  - Habakkuk 2:18
  - I Kings 18:25-29—“there was neither voice, nor any to answer”
  - Galatians 4:8
  - I Thessalonians 1:9
- The Corinthians have gone from serving “dumb idols” to serving the living God. In doing so, they have gone from no spiritual life and vitality to having the Spirit of the living God at work in their midst through the gifts. Paul doesn’t want them to be ignorant or misunderstand what is going on.

### **I Corinthians 12:3**

- **Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.**
- Paul wants the Corinthians to understand two things in this verse.
  - “that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed”
  - “and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost”
- First, Paul makes it known that no one energized or speaking by the power of God the Holy Spirit can say that Jesus is accursed. Put a different way, it is impossible for the Spirit of God to curse or anathematize the Son of God.

- Opinions differ as to exactly what this means. Ernest Campbell states the following regarding the matter in his commentary on I Corinthians:
  - “The implication of this statement is that one or more professed believers at Corinth were cursing Jesus; therefore, Paul makes it clear that anyone who does this does not have the Spirit (Rom. 8:9).” (Campbell, 194)
- Campbell thinks that Paul is referring lost people who don’t have the Spirit of God attempting to curse Christ.
- I can understand why he thinks/says that. However, given that the context here is spiritual gifts I wonder if Paul means that no man speaking by the Spirit of God through the gifts can all Jesus accursed. In other words, one-member of the Godhead is never going to speak against another member of the Godhead via the gifts. If someone claiming spiritual gifts speaks against the Lord Jesus Christ it is a sure indicator that they are a faker.
- In other words, through the functioning of spiritual gifts God the Holy Spirit is always going to affirm the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Could it be that is the first test for the legitimacy of spiritual gifts in the assembly:
  - Dumb idols don’t speak.
  - When the Spirit of God speaks via the gifts he always affirms the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
  - If someone claims to speak by the Spirit of God via the gifts and they deny the Lordship of Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit was not the source of that statement.
  - Therefore, you know a person who speaks in such a manner against Christ is not legitimate in their use of spiritual gifts i.e., they are a faker.