

Sunday, November 19, 2017—I Corinthians 12:28-31

Introduction

- Last Sunday we finished the section where Paul is talking about the body of Christ by looking at verses 21-27.
- It is important to recall that the section beginning in verse 12 and running through verse 27 is bracketed by a discussion of spiritual gifts.
- Verse 1—Paul does not want the Corinthians to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts.
- Verse 4—there are different gifts that are given by the same Spirit.
- Verse 7—the manifestation of the Spirit was given to everyman for the benefit of the entire body of Christ.
- Verse 11—reiterating the truth of verses 4 and 7.
 - Verse 12—“For as the body” begins the discussion of the body of Christ within the context of talking about the gifts.
 - Baptism by God the Holy Spirit is how one gets into the body of Christ.
 - Verse 14—the body is not one member by many.
 - Verse 18—God sets the various members into the body as it hath pleased him.
 - Verse 20—there are many members yet one body.
 - Verse 24—God is the one who is tempering the body together.
 - Verse 27—the Corinthians are the body of Christ and members in particular.
- Verse 28—circles back to a discussion of spiritual gifts.

I Corinthians 12:28

- **And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.**
- *And God hath set some in the church*—this statement is completely consistent with what Paul said in verses 18 and 24. The Godhead is setting the body of Christ up as it pleased them. The

same was true when it came to the issue of spiritual gifts. The Godhead was apportioning them to the body of Christ as they deemed necessary and fitting.

- *first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers*—after circling back to the topic of spiritual gifts Paul mentions some things that have not yet been discussed, namely apostles and teachers. Prophecy was mentioned in verse 10.
 - Ephesians 4:11—includes the three from I Corinthians 12:28 and adds two more. From this I conclude that in terms of understanding the various gifts given to the body of Christ one must compare scriptures with scriptures i.e., there is not one definitive list that includes all of them in one place.
 - Ephesians 3:5—Paul was not the only apostle or prophet given the body of Christ.
 - II Corinthians 12:11
 - Romans 11:13
- *after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues*—the phrase “after that” seems to imply that these gifts were secondary when compared to apostle, prophet, and teacher.
- We have already seen and commented on miracles, healing, and tongues when we went through verses 8-10.
- Two new gifts are added here in verse 28: 1) helps and 2) governments
 - *Helps*—the word translated “helps” in verse 28 only occurs this one time in the New Testament. The Oxford English Dictionary provides the following definition for the English word:
 - “The action of helping; the supplementing of action or resources by what makes them more efficient; aid, assistance, succor.”
 - Acts 26:22—“help” of God
 - Acts 27:17—“helps”
 - II Corinthians 4:8—“not in despair”
 - The gift of “helps” seems to be dealing with a supernatural capacity for aiding as assisting. It seems fitting that the gift of “helps” should be mentioned after the discussion of the feeble and comely part of the body of Christ in verse 22-23.

- *Governments*—again the Greek word translated governments in verse 28 only occurs here and nowhere else in the New Testament. In his *Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament* E.W. Bullinger states the following regarding the word translated “governments” in verse 28:
 - “a steering, piloting, direction, hence, a governing. The idea being that of guidance rather than rule.”
 - “administering and directing” (Campbell, 206)
- Given the structure of verse 28 it would seem that “miracles,” “healings,” “helps,” “governments,” and “tongues” are support functions to “apostle,” “prophet,” and “teacher” in the first part of the verse.

I Corinthians 12:29-30

- ***Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? 30) Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?***
- These two verses are a series of rhetorical questions. Given our study of the context, the obvious answer to every one of these questions is no.
- Then when are there entire denominations questioning the salvation of their people if they haven’t spoken in tongues?

I Corinthians 12:31

- **But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.**
- This verse tells you that the Corinthians did have a coveting problem when it came to the issue of spiritual gifts.
- Paul is going to show them a more excellent way than the gifts.