

MORNING WATCH

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Body is One, Has Many Members

A verse-by-verse commentary on 1 Corinthians Chapter 12

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. 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.

The Apostle Paul here reminds the Corinthian brethren that they were converted from among the heathens; having been carried away and led to worship idols. Paul then states that only the consecrated; those begotten of the Holy Spirit can rightfully call Jesus, Lord. By the same token, those who would refer to Jesus as accursed would no doubt have the spirit of the adversary. The Apostle here is introducing the gifts of the Holy Spirit by pointing out that the experiences of the consecrated begin with the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11). It is through the Holy Spirit that we receive such gifts about which Paul begins to write about in verse 4.

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” (Vs 4-7)

Here Paul is connecting the gifts to the "Lord" and to "God" as it seems that the Corinthians had forgotten the source of the gifts they had as well as the purpose, which was to produce an effective ministry. Their forgetfulness had led to competition in the use of their gifts. These gifts enabled the possessor to minister to the needs of others. They were not for private individual enrichment nor for rivalry and jealousy but for the benefit of all. The word *administration* is *diakonia*, which comes from our word Deacon, which is Strong's number 1248, giving the idea of a servant attending to others.

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of heal-

ing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” (Vs 8-11)

In these verses Paul mentions some of the many gifts which the consecrated may possess; these gifts come *through* or *by* the Spirit. They are as follows:

1. Wisdom (*sophias*) or total thinking.
2. Knowledge (*gnoseos*) or understanding.
3. Faith (*pistis*) that infinite trust or high degree of belief in God, often appearing in times of great crisis or opportunity.
4. Gifts of healing (*chismata iamaton*), different kinds of cures or remedies,
5. Working of miracles (*energemata dunameon*) or super-human powers,
6. Prophecy (*propheteia*) or divine inspiration and announcing the decrees of God,
7. Discerning of spirits (*diakriseis pneumaton*), to distinguish between the Spirit of God, the spirit of Satan and the spirit of the world.
8. Tongues (*glosson*), use of speech or dialects that the speaker has not learned and
9. Interpretation of tongues (*ermeneia glosson*), to render glossolalia understandable to the audience in their language.

In Romans 12, the Apostle Paul makes mention of other gifts, such as exhorting, giving, ruling and showing mercy; in Ephesians 4 he mentions apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers. When the New Testament was completed some of these gifts were phased out and no longer needed. We need to remember that the Holy Spirit has given to each individual one or more gifts; no amount of boasting should be involved. The Holy Spirit has done as He desired. These gifts all work “that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.” (Vs. 12-14)

Here Paul presents the analogy of the human body to the Church at Corinth. A similar analogy is found in Romans 12:4-8. Just as the human body is a unit having many members, so also is Christ. All members of the human body (the hand, the eye, the ear, the nose, the various organs etc.,) all function because the head directs, so the church as a body with Christ as its Head functions as God desires.

As in the human body, the various members have duties to perform for the benefit of other members; so among the consecrated on earth. The various members have gifts and abilities that are to be used for the benefit of the other members. Some of these privileges may be of a humble kind, nevertheless they have their place and these humble inconspicuous duties are necessary to be performed by some members for the good of others and for the benefit of the whole body.

“If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body.” (Vs 15-20)

Paul now begins to encourage the brethren to occupy his or her own place and perform his or her own duties, and not feel discouraged or put out because he or she does not occupy some other position. In the church there were Jews and Gentiles, male and female, educated and ignorant - all were products of a diverse set of environmental factors, but they were compacted together by a common experience. They were independent but also interdependent. The Holy Spirit had joined them together because they were in submission to His will.

“And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or

one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” (Vs 21-26)

The Apostle Paul here is challenging Corinthian brethren to see their need of each other. Just as the eye could not say to the body, I have no need of the feet, so the Corinthians must see that they need each other. No member of the body is sufficient in itself. It is impossible in the physical body; it is impossible in the spiritual body. In fact, in contrast to what is often thought, the weaker members are essential to the proper functioning of the body. These may only seem to be weaker; they may actually be weaker. But the point is that they are part of the body and they are for a specific purpose, without which the body simply cannot function properly. They are necessary. They are vital. They are a part of the body.

Jehovah God works in and through the human body which He has given to all His people, so He works in and through the church body as He sees fit in order to carry out His Divine Plan of the Ages.

“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 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. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.” (Vs 27-31)

Here we see the teaching that the apostles were the head members, they were first. Theirs was the office of seeing first the truths the Holy Spirit revealed, they being the Lord's special mouthpieces. As they heard the voice of the Spirit they spoke out the message, and they wrote their epistles for our learning. The early church did not always appreciate the apostles as they should have done. And some came to think that speaking with tongues and healing were more important than prophesying and teaching.

Hence we see according to the Apostle, that whatever the gift possessed, all members constituted one interdependent body. There was to be no spirit of rivalry, no wish to discredit or demean the other members. But they did wish all to recognize that the teaching office was more important than the physical healing.

But there was one way in which all might participate and all might rejoice; the way of love. The gifts of the Spirit were not confined to the teaching, miracles, healing, etc., which gifts were distributed “to every man severally as he will,” (v. 11). There was and still is a “fruit” of the Spirit that is the unceasing privilege of all to exercise and to enjoy. That is love. Love is the combination of all those sentiments and virtues which is shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit, and which enables them to rejoice even in tribulation; that enables them to love and cherish every member of the body, great or small, that appreciates the difficulties and trials of all and would smooth the way of each on the path of life.

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