

A More Excellent Way

I Cor. 12:31-13:1-13

Introduction

- I Cor. 13 is set in the discussion of spiritual gifts. (12-14)
 - Spiritual gifts were those that were supernatural or miraculous in nature.
 - They were a demonstrable evidence of God’s activities in the live of some disciples in the first century.
 - I Cor. 13 → Not only a spiritual gift discussion, but a look at a “more excellent way.”

The Church At Corinth

- Testimony to the power of the gospel.
- A pagan city filled with all kinds of evil and ungodliness. New Orleans, San Francisco, New York, Las Vegas, Hollywood the sins and vices that can be found there... and every where... and add in blatant idolatry, temple fornication and you have a glimpse of what Paul faced in Corinth.
 - “To Corinthianize” became syn. with immorality
 - I Cor. 6:9-11 → such were some of you...
 - I Cor. 3:1-4 → immature and carnal...there was jealousy, envy, pride and division in the church at Corinth.
 - “The kingdom of God had become a battleground for an ego war.”

Spiritual Gifts

- **The gifts:** 1 Cor. 12:4-11
 - Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues → ***Revelation and confirmation of truth.***
- **The purpose:** the gifts were not an end of themselves. God used to reveal his will and to confirm that revelation. (Mk. 16:19-20; Heb. 2:2-4)
- **The problem:** Pride and envy over one's gifts rather than using for the benefit of all. (12:7; 14:4-5,12, 16)

Spiritual Gifts

- **Charismatic Beliefs:**

- Spiritual gifts for and should be sought by believers today. (esp. tongues)
- If you want to be a truly spiritual Christian, then you've got to have one of these gifts, if you don't, you may be a Christian, but a carnal one engaging in a pitiful struggle, not filled with the power of God.
- Seeks to short-circuit the process of growth and maturity in the life of a Christian . (study, self-denial, diligence, trials, etc.)
- The Charismatic message is: “get your spirituality, immediately, directly, superior discipleship, superior Christianity.

Spiritual Gifts

– A false doctrine:

- Spiritual gifts ceased when their purpose was fulfilled. (Acts 8:17-18; Jn. 16:13; II Tim. 3:16-17; Gal. 1:6-9; I Cor. 13:8-12)
- Their “gifts” don’t measure up. (cf. tongues, prophecy, healing)
- Spiritual growth is not instantaneous. Takes time, effort in word of God, endurance.
- Paul did not tell those with spiritual gifts that they were superior Christians.

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- **Faith** → Not a feeling, but the persuasion of the truth of God's word based on evidence. (Heb. 11:1; Rom. 10:17)
 - Essential. (Heb. 11:6; Jn. 8:24; Rev. 21:8)
 - Motivates action. (II Cor. 4:13)
 - Foundation for hope. (Heb. 11:1)

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- **Hope** → that for which one desires and has a basis of expectation. (Rom. 8:24; Titus. 1:2)
 - Can be no stronger than our faith. Hope cannot live where faith does not live, and faith cannot live where God's word is absent.
 - Is an anchor of the soul.
 - 18 That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19 Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast...(Heb. 6:18-19)
 - Hope motivates purity. (I Jn. 3:2-3)

A More Excellent Way → Love -- I Cor. 13:4-7

- **Suffereth long** → Long suffering with others; slow to avenge.
- **Kind** → Active good will; benevolent
- **Envieth not** → Does not burn over the good fortune, etc. of others.
- **Vaunteth not itself** → Does not brag and extoll own “virtues”.
- **Not puffed up** → Not lifted up with pride; does not parade self.
- **Doth not behave itself unseemly** → Is not rude or unbecoming.
- **Seeketh not her own** → Not self-serving; self-absorbed.
- **Not easily provoked** → Not irritable or “touchy”.

A More Excellent Way – I Cor. 13:4-7

- **Thinketh no evil** → Does not take account of wrongs suffered
- **Rejoiceth not in iniquity** → No delight in evil or misfortune of others.
- **Rejoiceth in the truth** → Takes pleasure in what is right.
- **Beareth all things** → Does not harbor resentment; seeks to forgive.
- **Believeth all things** → Eager to believe the best rather than the worst.
- **Hopeth all things** → Is optimistic for others
- **Endureth all things** → Perseveres through trials and difficulties.

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- **Love** → Unconquerable benevolence – undefeatable goodwill...
 - The greatest
 - God is love → 1 Jn. 4:8; Matt. 5:44-48
 - All other virtues, qualities and true obedience are the fulfillment of love. (Matt. 22:37-39)
 - Love is to motivate all we do – 1 Cor. 13:1-4
 - Love → Obedience. (Jn. 14:15; Heb. 5:8-9)