

The Book of 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Session 56 Notetaker

Fig. 1: Pattern of Edification (Reproof – Correction – Instruction)

1:1-4:21 – RCI concerning _____

5:1-10:33 – RCI concerning _____

11:1-16:24 – RCI concerning _____

• 11:1-16 – the ungodly labor of heeding _____

• 11:17-34 – the ungodly labor of the _____

• 12:1-14:40 – the ungodly labor of _____

○ 12:1-3 – _____

○ 12:4-13:13 – _____

○ 14:1-40 – _____

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Session 56: The Best Gifts

We left off in our last session looking at 1 Corinthians 12:28 and the five operations of the gifts listed in that verse. Now, we will complete the chapter.

Starting in chapter 13, we continue to the next form of doctrine. To get our bearings, let's locate ourselves doctrinally in the Book by observing the pattern of edification. This will be filled in on your Notetaker, Fig. 1.

We begin by reading the remainder of the chapter.

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.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. ²⁹ 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? ³¹ But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

One of the problems concerning spiritual gifts in the Corinthian assembly was that they were exalting the less honorable gifts, like tongues, and despising the more honorable gifts, like Paul's apostleship. Paul sets the record straight in verse 28 by listing apostles as "first" and tongues as last.

The Corinthians had the erroneous idea that the gift was the measure of a person's spiritual aptitude. What they missed was the principle that while some gifts were better than others, there are no members of the body which are better than others. Can you see the difference?

Having listed several of the spiritual gifts, Paul then establishes, through a series of questions, that there was no gift which everyone possessed. Instead, only some within the assembly possessed any of the gifts. Therefore, not everyone was an apostle; not everyone was a worker of miracles; and not everyone spoke with tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:29 *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?*

The answer to each of the questions is “no.” The whole idea behind the rhetorical questions of verses 29-30 is that there was not “equity of endowment.” In other words, some were given the best gifts, while others were given lesser gifts. The Spirit chose who would get which gift. This is an important point which Paul is making, and it warrants some consideration.

Can we assume, based on verse 27, that the members of the Corinthians assembly which received spiritual gifts are indeed justified unto eternal life?

1 Corinthians 12:27 *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

I think we can, as Paul is writing to the members of the body of Christ. So, that being the case, how many of them are “in Christ?” All of them. How many of them have been given a new identity in Christ? All of them. How many of them have received the “mercies of God?” All of them. How many were given the Spirit of God when they trusted Christ? All of them. How many of them have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places? Again, all of them. But even so, some are given gifts which are considered to be “the best gifts,” while others are given gifts which are lesser. The “best gifts,” according to Paul, are the edification gifts.