

The Rock: 10-17-2021**The Gifts series****First reading:**

Title: God has appointed

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:27-30 (black bible Pg. 902)

Theme:

Essential to the health of the body is the contribution of each individual in that body as God has gifted and apportioned.

Introduction:

As we come to the end of chapter 12, Paul turns from the instruction of overall unity and its essentialness to health, and begins to focus on the various gifts which individual members have.

The list he begins with here is not exhaustive, but is essential to the overall health of the body of Christ.

We find, as I said last week, other lists. Romans 12 for example, as well as what are called "the ascension gifts" in Ephesians four.

There are other places as well, as we find Peter touch on things in his letters which are vital for the overall health of each community of believers around the world.

Looking at our opening verse this morning (verse 27) Paul makes clear:

-1 Corinthians 12:27 (ESV)

"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

Paul, once again, is building on the truth we find in 12:2b as well as verse 28 here, where he states that God arranged and God appoints:

-1 Corinthians 12:24b (ESV)

"...But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it..."

-1 Corinthians 12:28a (ESV)

"...And God has appointed in the church..."

Reminding the church in Corinth (as well as us today) to guard against self-appointment, pridefulness, boastfulness, and an arrogance which can actually turn into bullying.

Be wary of people like this. You will find such folks do not like to be

questioned about anything, nor do they care to be challenged with regards to their views and their thinking.

It's also very helpful for us to ask, once again, "Who is being glorified? Who is being edified? Given this, it is not surprising that, much like the list of gifts Paul has in Ephesians 4, he starts with apostles and prophets.

The Story:

-1 Corinthians 12:28a (ESV)

"And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets..."

Why? Because they are the first layer of the foundation - with Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone keeping everything straight, true and solid, as any stone mason will know.

When Paul uses this picture in Ephesians, he is reminding them (and us) of their "new" position and standing in Jesus:

-Ephesians 2:19-22 (ESV)

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom

the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

The foundation that we build on has been established in good doctrine, which begins with the absolute truth that Jesus of Nazareth, the risen King and Lord is at the center of it all.

Something to remember from Ephesians 4 is that the gifts of apostle and prophet is not the same as the "office" of one called to be an Apostle and / or Prophet.

This is what Paul, in this letter to the Corinthians, is establishing here. That the Apostles and Prophets we find in the book of Acts for example, had to meet certain requirements -and it wasn't just to be "a sent one".

Paul emphasizes these in terms of function as a gift, rather than the office which God had called particular people to.

Understand then, that anyone who is sent to proclaim the message of Christ, especially to places where it has never been proclaimed, is functioning in the apostolic gifting that Paul writes here.

This does not mean, and we have to be careful, that this then makes that person an Apostle -by office as Paul, the 12 Apostles and the others were.

Why do I say that? Because one of the requirements of that office is found in Acts 1:22b, where Luke specifically records for us that one must be:

-Acts 1:22b (ESV)

"...a witness to his resurrection."

So, Paul here is working this out for us, saying that in function (glorifying God /edifying the body) this gifting is for today, and for the building up of the body of Christ.

Missionaries like Jim Elliot, Eric Liddle, David Livingstone and so many others, are all examples of people having the apostolic gift. Yet none were Apostles because none of them saw the risen Jesus.

Prophets, this too we learned, is not an office to be held or a title to declare, but rather a gift which glorifies God, edifies the body, and clarifies His word.

David Hill, in his book "New Testament prophecy" is helpful here:

"New Testament prophecy therefore includes both conventional preaching, when the preacher has the sense of being gripped and convicted by the Spirit about his or her message, and more spontaneous unpremeditated utterances..." Christian prophets are "those who have grasped the meaning of scripture, perceived its powerful relevance to the life of the individual, the Church, and society, and declare that message fearlessly."

-New testament prophecy Pg. 231

"Their prophecy", Craig Blomberg states, "is not on par with Scripture and their exercise of the gift, like that of all other spiritual gifts, is subject to error and misrepresentation."

-NIV Application commentary Pg. 245

(talk a bit about those who are gifted in this who seek council and prayer from elders / pastors on application, interpretation and such)

So, this is one of the reasons we don't stone anyone anymore for saying "Thus sayeth the Lord".

So, we need to understand the prophetic gifting in this way, functioning to edify the body, clarify the already written Scriptures, to the glory of God.

When we understand this, the gifts become less about ego, pride and the bizarre desire to start your own traveling ministry show based on a gift you have, and perhaps the one time it worked through you.

They are then seen as they should be seen, in light of how it serves this community of believers, and glorifies God.

Onto the next group Paul gives us:

-1 Corinthians 12: 28b (ESV)

"...third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing..."

Those who are teachers, are, again as Paul says in Ephesians 4, pastors (primarily) as well as those who have been called to be part of the teaching community among the local congregation. (teaching elders: Claude, Parks)

Paul makes clear in his letter to Timothy that elders ought to be able to teach. Why? Because along with the lead elder (pastor) they are responsible for the spiritual well-being of the congregation.

That doesn't mean no one else is gifted in teaching, but it does mean that we are not to let just anyone teach. Nor are we

to let someone teach without first examining what they are teaching.

Dictatorial? Arrogant? Controlling? No, it is God's command. We are to do so with all humility, because teachers are held to a much higher standard:

-James 3:1 (ESV)

"Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness."

Our duty before God is to insure good teaching in the form of sound Biblical doctrine.

Now, when we look at miracles and healing, I think it helpful to do so in light of the word Paul puts at the end: "helping".

Helping people is actually a gift of the Holy Spirit. God does work miracles, and can divinely heal. But that is not the normative way for Him.

If it were, it would no longer be a miracle, now would it? It would simply just be the normal every day thing we see.

But God does work miracles through gifted people who help. He heals in the same

way. The medical sciences and the doctors and nurses come to mind here, in the very practical sense.

God has simply gifted and wired some people to be able to do these things. If we see once again that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of heavenly lights, then we can understand and believe that the miracle and healing God provides shows up wearing scrubs.

-1 Corinthians 12:28c (ESV)

It is no less a miracle, no less a healing. Can He simply heal or miraculously fix someone? Yes. Is that what He does all the time? No.

Be wary of the one who tells you that your faith is weak, or that your belief is not strong enough, and that's why God is not healing you or a loved one you have been praying for.

These types of people are self-serving and offer lies and false hope to hurting people.

Thus, the word helper. It's similar to Romans 12:8 (acts of mercy) and implies that there are those who actually minister to both the spiritual and physical needs within the community of believers. (Fee Pg. 621)

Paul now closes this list with a surprising gift and then the troublesome one:

"...administrating, and various kinds of tongues."

What is up with "administration"? After all, for those of us who grew up in the Charismatic movement, church just happens on Sunday morning, and any kind of planning and preparation stifles the Spirit. Right?

Well, no. Paul puts this here because it needs to be here, in part because of 14:40:

-1 Corinthians 14:40 (ESV)

"But all things should be done decently and in order."

The Corinthian church had a major problem with Sunday morning chaos. The Holy Spirit can and does move on Sunday mornings more often in ways which do not look like a giant circus and free for all.

Why? Because chaos and foolishness do not glorify God, nor does it edify the body. Rather, the self is satisfied and that is all. Sadly, it does nothing for an unbeliever and seeker who shows up for a visit.

The church needs to be run well, to be seen in the wider community as doing so and being a good representative of Jesus in what we do and what we say -and how we treat other human beings.

Creating a healthy culture both within the church and our community at large.

Good administration is a gift from God anywhere it is applied. Perhaps we could use more of this, combined with a contrite heart and civility within all levels of society, government and yes, in the Church as well.

Perhaps, and rightly so, the Church should lead the way in humility -choosing the side of Christ instead of an aisle which suits our desires to have rights preserved.

But enough on that. Various kinds of tongues. When we look at this, we need to understand that this gift is the same in function as the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. But it does not have the same purpose.

Paul is dealing with the gift here, NOT the Baptism. Why do I say that? Well, the gift is (with interpretation) for the edification of the body.

Again, same in function (how it works), but different in purpose (why it's given). Look with me at Acts 2:

-Acts 2:8-,11b (ESV)

"And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?...-we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

The purpose and function of the Baptism is for the power to witness, and the tongues that were given then, did just that.

There is no need for interpretation here. They hear of God's mighty works. This is very helpful for us as we look here in 1 Corinthians. Why? Because tongues as a gift (same in function) has a different purpose and we see that it actually needs interpretation in order to be useful. Bloomberg again:

"Speaking in tongues must not be confused with what happened to the disciples at Pentecost. There the audience understood without benefit of an interpreter, here interpretation is required."

-Pg. 245

This is very helpful as we look at Paul's closing string of questions, with the obvious and expected response of "No".

-1 Corinthians 12:29-30 (ESV)

"Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?"

The problem for Pentecostals, and I am one, is that to say no to this question seems to then mean, that if you aren't speaking in tongues, either you don't have the Holy Spirit at all, or you haven't been "baptized" yet.

Both of these lines of thinking are wrong. Sadly, many people struggle through poor teaching here and either believe wrongly about the Holy Spirit and then about themselves. Or, they're afraid to even approach the gifts, especially tongues.

Paul is not doing that at all. He is clearing up and then defining proper use. Some may be baptized in the Holy Spirit, giving evidence of speaking in tongues, and perhaps never doing so again.

Tongues is simply the initial physical evidence that the Holy Spirit has filled someone in that unique and special way, giving them the power to witness about Jesus.

Some may grow in the gift of tongues and even give a word for the body, while

others may interpret it. The Goal however, for Christian maturity is to interpret it yourself:

-1 Corinthians 14:13 (ESV)

"Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret."

Often times a person may never get a tongue for the body, but they pray in the Spirit during their personal quiet time with the Lord. That's what I do.

Either way ultimately, prime goal is the maturing of your Christian walk as an individual in order that the body of Christ be blessed and healthy.

This is the point of being one body -many parts - within that unity, God has appointed, and remember that the Spirit gives as He wills.

Seek the gifts, but understand that we can make nothing happen, nor do we demand of God. These are gifts remember.

He desires to give as he sees fit, for His glory and your benefit.

Are you praying that God would give gifts to you, in that way for that purpose?