

THE MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY

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1Corinthians 12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

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

1Corinthians 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.

1Corinthians 12:29 *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?*

1Corinthians 12:30 *Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*

1Corinthians 12:31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: **and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.**

1Corinthians 12: 1-7

We live in a world full of religion. In that world, popularity in religion has its advantages. We know a lot of people who listen to radio and TV preachers because they are famous. And let one of them exhibit special so-called gifts and people flock to see him. In my youth it was Oral Roberts (small overview here).

This keen interest in religious practitioners with prominent gifts is not new. We have to suspect it in the Church at Corinth because of Paul's admonition in our text chapter. In fact, there is just the slightest tendency among many Baptists to exalt preachers and other so-called ministers as though these men were hob-nobbing with God and as though they were important above other members of the body of Christ.

We must admit that ministers who deal in the gifts Paul mentioned and minister in the churches of the Lord Jesus play an important role in the ongoing business of the church. They fill critical niches where God has need of particular instruments of His unfolding purposes as he evangelizes the world and builds up the saints of God. So, these people stand in fairly prominent and public positions where they are under scrutiny and seem to more openly represent the presence of God among us than do other members of Jesus' churches.

In our text, Paul talks about these church ministries and discusses the many functions and the relationship among the various members serving in a church. But after all his comments about the necessity of these offices and how they are to interact, he changes the direction of his discourse with a very profound statement which we read in the last verse of Chapter 12 (read it again).

In this statement he sets the stage for all that is said in the 13th Chapter. It is in that chapter that we find an essay about another ministry that is uniquely different, yet interlocked with all these ministries he discussed in Chapter 12. But, he has cut it out from all these other ministries to give it the proper distinction. Also, in separating it for consideration, he has been careful to title it as the more excellent ministry. This needs to be done, because people all too often give more

credit to some of the showy ministries listed in Chapter 12, and tend to totally forget the most important, most effective, most Christlike of all the ministries available to believers. Our subject today is about the **more excellent way of ministry**. To deal with this subject we will do as Paul and look at what this ministry does not consist of, as well as what it does consist of.

I. Beginning in Chapter 13: The Earmarks of Love as a Ministry

A. 1Cor. 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and **have not charity**, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

■ To attain the more excellent ministry (the ministry of love) we must remember that **the best possible talents are so much noise without love** (as of course, are the worst talents).

B. 1Cor. 13:2 And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

■ To exercise the more excellent ministry (the ministry of love) we must realize that those who might **theoretically exhibit the most powerful manifestations of God's power** are nothing without love.

C. 1Cor. 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

■ To be effective in the more excellent ministry (of love) we must remember that the **most ardent sacrifices thinkable without the presence of love are worthless** to us

D. 1Cor. 13:4 Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

■ This verse teaches us a lot about what the ministry of love IS NOT: The ministry of love:

- > Does not show intolerance (suffereth long)
- > Avoids being useless or cold and uncaring (the word kind means to make oneself useful or to practice benevolence)
- > Avoids being envious
- > Avoids boasting or self-aggrandizement Avoids pride and haughtiness

E. 1Cor. 13:5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

■ People pursuing a ministry of love do not:

- > Act inappropriate to the occasion or setting
- > Plot to have their own way
- > Get mad at a whim, or go around with a chip on their shoulder
- > Speculate that everything is bad and will lead to a bad conclusion

F. 1Cor. 13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

■ Believers who would practice a ministry of love do not:

- > Find any joy in injustice or moral wrongness

> But they DO find joy in truth

G. 1Cor. 13:7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

■ In the ministry of love, God's people:

- > Put up with some things in silence (they don't gripe over everything; they learn to recognize and bear up under things that are burdensome without complaining)
- > Believe everything that God has said and promised,
- > Have a steadfast confidence that God will bring to pass all good things,
- > Patiently endure all hardship and negative elements in their lives (Bearing all things is about not griping; this is about being submissive to the Lord and circumstances about being under hardship)

H. Rom 12:9 "Let love be **without dissimulation....**"

■ Believers practicing a ministry of love share and show that love **without hypocrisy.**

> **1John 4:12** "...If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."

II. Now that we see how a ministry of love is to be conducted, what about **the manner or nature of the love which it is conducted with?**

■ **John 13:34** "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; **as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.**"

> "...as I have loved you..."

- Loves without qualification
- Loves knowing our faults
- Loves despite our faults
- Loves despite the fact that we do things to dishonor Him
 - ✓ ...love one another:
- No one is exempt...all are to love all other believers