

## The Best Gifts

- I. The O.T. church was provided gifts for that economy.
  - A. They were given circumcision as an outward token of covenant inclusion. **JOH 7:22.**
  - B. They were given political/geographical nation status. **2SAM 7:23.**
  - C. They were given a king like the nations. **HOS 13:11.**
  - D. They were given prophets with signs to prove their calling. **PSA 74:9.**
  - E. They were given deliverance miracles and manna for forty years. **ACT 7:36; JOS 5:12.**
  - F. They were given the adoption, glory (ark of the covenant), service of God, etc. **ROM 9:4.**
    1. The service of God included a teaching priesthood. **MAL 2:7.**
    2. This office, like that of the king, was hereditary, not keyed to merit.
  - G. Their best gift was the scriptures. **ROM 3:1-2.**
  
- II. The church at Corinth is a case study in N.T. gifts of the Spirit to the church.
  - A. They came "...behind in no gift..." (**1CO 1:7**) yet they were carnal. **1CO 3:1.**
  - B. The most detailed information about the gifts is in **1CO 12.**
  - C. There were abuses of some gifts, like the gift of tongues. **1CO 14.**
  - D. The ministerial gifts to them were being used for factionalizing. **1CO 3:3-5; 4:6.**
  - E. Corinth had plenty of spiritual gifts but lacked edification and order. **1CO 14:26, 33, 40.**
  - F. There were gifts distributed severally (individually), not generally. **1CO 12:4-11, 28-30.**
    1. The several gift of faith (**v. 9**) is not the common faith of believers (**TIT 1:4**) but special faith to do great things. **ACT 6:8; MAT 17:20.**
    2. A risk of these gifts because of human nature was an assumption of superiority.
    3. Power trips are not conducive to spiritual harmony and mutual edifying. Hence, the warnings against such. **MAT 20:21; LUK 10:20; ACT 8:19.**
  - G. Of the spiritual gifts, Paul encouraged the pursuit of the best of them. **1CO 12:31.**
    1. Prophesying (revelation or teaching) was one such gift since, unlike the gift of tongues, it facilitated common edification. **1CO 14:39.**
    2. There were common gifts which all believers in the church had:
      - a. The gift of eternal life and a heavenly inheritance. **JOH 5:24.**
      - b. The new birth by the Spirit of God. **TIT 3:5.**
      - c. The gift of a place in the Spirit-indwelt church of Jesus Christ. **1CO 12:12-13.**
      - d. The gift of the common faith because of the new birth. **GAL 5:22.**
    3. In the absence of any of the special and particular gifts, the common gifts could still hold a church together and make it spiritually prosperous.
      - a. The miraculous gifts of healings, tongues, etc. were only for a season, even as such supernatural expedencies were given to Israel of old for a season. **MIC 7:15.**
      - b. The revelatory gifts of prophecy, wisdom and knowledge would similarly terminate in favor of the scriptures of the apostles. **1JO 4:6; 2PE 1:19-21.**
      - c. Even where a church lacked a resident minister, it could survive. **ACT 14:21-23; TIT 1:5.**
      - d. Since genuine faith must be in accord with the word of God, a church could even identify faulty ministers and mark them as such. **ROM 16:17-18; REV 2:2.**
    4. Thus, temporary gifts are inferior to permanent gifts and particular gifts are (with qualifications) inferior to common gifts in the church.
      - a. The best gifts (like prophesying) edify all.

- b. The best gifts survive the end of the apostolic era.
  - c. Paul had not specifically magnified the common gift of faith in **1CO 12**, but the last verse leads into it (and others) as "...a more excellent way."
- III. **1CO 13** is renowned as the "charity chapter" since it sets forth charity as the greatest of the "more excellent way."
- A. charity: God's love to man; Man's love of God and his neighbour, commanded as the fulfilling of the Law, Matt. xxii. 37, 39. *esp.* The Christian love of our fellow-men; Christian benignity of disposition expressing itself in Christ-like conduct: one of the 'three Christian graces', fully described by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii.
  - B. **1CO 13:1-3** shows that other spiritual gifts are only legitimized by charity. c/w **1CO 8:1**.
    - 1. Miracles, revelatory, super-faith, martyrdom, etc. may not benefit a ministry.
    - 2. On the other hand, charity is not a substitute for discernment and righteousness. **REV 2:19-20**.
  - C. **1CO 13:4-7** underscores the above with qualifications.
    - 1. Charity is not about self but neither does it gloss over iniquity, bear with known sinners, believe lies, etc. **REV 2:2; 1CO 5:1-2**.
    - 2. Charity should lead (**1CO 14:1**) but not to the exclusion of truth
    - 3. Charity covers a multitude of sins (**1PE 4:8**) by containing it through private reproof where possible (**LEV 19:17**) or passing over a personal offense where such does not embolden folly. **PRO 19:11**.
    - 4. Charity is the *bond of perfectness* (**COL 3:14**) in that it is not self-promoting nor sin-promoting.
- IV. "Charity never faileth..." (**1CO 13:8**). Above all other gifts it endures into eternity.
- A. The temporary revelatory and sign gifts would fail (end) in deference to the completed body of knowledge we now have in the scriptures, and which was implied in **JAM 1:25**.
  - B. As the temporary props to the perfected revelation would pass, so the temporary state of limited understanding of the child of God shall one day pass. **1CO 13:11-12**.
  - C. The three things of "the more excellent way" (**1CO 12:31**) continue this theme.
    - 1. Faith is of things *unseen* and thus a temporary prop. **HEB 11:1; 2CO 5:7**.
    - 2. Hope is of things *unseen* and thus a temporary prop. **ROM 8:20-23**.
    - 3. Charity is of things *seen*: our brethren and neighbors now (**1JO 4:20; GAL 6:9-10**) and the redeemed family in eternity whom we will see with our own refreshed eyes, per **JOB 19:25-27**. c/w **1TH 4:16-17**.
    - 4. Charity is the most excellent of the more excellent.
- V. **1TI 1:5; 1CO 16:14**.