

Order in the Church | 1 Corinthians 12:28-31

- Verse 28 –
 - Paul declares that God has put in place various functions/roles within the church, and that there is an order of priority in these functions.
 - **First apostles** - Without doubt, apostles were first in authority in the church. Ephesians 2:20 also lists apostles first as foundational in the church.
 - **Secondarily prophets** - This is not, in my opinion, a reference to the Hebrew prophets, but rather to the prophets within the church, as in Acts 13:1-3.
 - **Thirdly teachers** - After the foundation was laid (Eph. 2:20), the role of the teacher became preeminent. This is the most needed function in the church today, since the role of apostle and prophet is now ceased and replaced with the provision of the completed revelation of Scripture.
 - **After that miracles** - the miracle worker was a confirmation kind of work, giving proof that God was doing His *kingdom* work through the church. With the removal of the Kingdom offer, the confirmation work of miracles is no longer needed.
 - **Then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues** - Paul puts these four assistance and administrative gifts in a lower priority (but equal necessity) within the church.
 - Are all of these operational in the church today? Just because **God hat set some in the church** does not mean that God continues to appoint these roles and functions. Historically, God has done so, and this is all that can be definitively concluded from this verse.
- Verses 29-31 - In harmony with his previous words, Paul shows that there are various gifts in the church. In opposition to modern theology about gifts and about calling, Paul encourages the church to **covet earnestly the best gifts**. Literally, we are to *strive for* the best *charismata*. This implies that spiritual gifts can be *learned*.

The Charity Chapter | 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

- Verses 1-2 –
 - Having discussed *manifestation* gifts, Paul now enters into an important conversation about a coming spiritual world-order in which the manifestation gifts would not be present, and he encourages the Corinthian believers to begin to consider **a more excellent way** (1 Cor. 12:31).
 - In verse 1, for the first time, Paul speaks of **tongues** not only **of men** but also **of angels**. All previous examples of speaking in tongues can be taken as the **tongues of men**. Here we are introduced to the *possibility* of the **tongues...of angels**.
 - Regardless of which variety of tongues, the greater need is **charity**, without which the speaker is an annoyance compared to **sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal**.
 - Paul also mentions again the manifestation gifts of **prophecy, understanding all mysteries** (called the **word of wisdom** in 1 Cor 12:8), **knowledge** or **faith**.

- Some have protested the KJV use of **charity** as the translation of ἀγάπη [agape]. However, the word charity is used 24 times in the New Testament to describe a believer's love toward another believer.
 - It is from the Latin *caritas* which was a word used solely for *Christian love toward other Christians*. In other places, the KJV translated the same word as *love* (see 1 Cor 16:24), and these are contexts which do not demand a purely Christian activity.
 - For example, in 1 Corinthians 16:24 Paul loves (no doubt in a Christian way), but this kind of love is not purely Christian, and could be based on experience, affections, etc., and held by anyone.
- Verse 3 - This verse speaks both of the definition of **charity** and the futility of social justice activity on its own. As for the definition, **charity** is not *acts of kindness and generosity*, as has been perverted in modern English. As to social justice/social gospel activities, it is done with the belief that *action* somehow expresses the love of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Verses 4-7 –
 - Having discussed the need for **charity** and given indirect insight into its character, now Paul gives specific and definitive characteristics to this unique kind of love.
 - This *pure Christian love* **suffereth long**. That is, it has a *long fuse*. The Greek is μακροθυμέω [makrothumeo], a "long-anger." Note that charity is not void of anger, but not quick to anger (James 1:19).
 - **Charity is kind**. The Greek word has the implication of *helpful activity*.
 - **Charity envieth not** - the Greek implies *jealousy*.
 - **Charity vaunteth not itself** - the term has to do with being a *braggart*.
 - Charity is, similarly, **not puffed up**. Compare 1 Corinthians 8:1 where knowledge puffs up but charity builds up. The word implies *nothing but air*.
 - The Greek ἀσχημονέω [aschamoneo] is **unseemly** behavior, coming from *schema* (having order), with the negative particle ("a") as a prefix. It is possible that **seeketh not her own** and **not easily provoked** are further descriptions of unseemly behavior. The word **provoked** is παροξύνω [paroxuno], literally, "with acid."
 - **Thinketh no evil** is "doesn't recite or add up that which is bad/evil/sinful. The word **thinketh** is λογίζομαι [logizomai], which is to reason (Mark 11:31), conclude (Rom. 3:28), count (Rom. 4:3), impute (Rom. 4:8) and account (Gal. 3:6).
 - The rejoicing in charity is not in **iniquity** (that which is in opposition to righteousness and justice) but in **the truth**. (Sadly, modern Christians seem to be much more enamored with the iniquity of a brother/sister in Christ than in the truth. Would that we build an environment in which truth is celebrated).
 - Three positive closing remarks about charity. First, it **beareth all things**. The Greek word is στέγω [stego], which is *to bear a load*, and a form of the word (stege) is "a roof." The dinosaur *stegosaurus* is named with this Greek word. It is enhanced with ὑπομένω [hupomeno] which is *to be under the load* and translated **endureth all things**. In addition, charity **hopeth all things**, a word of great encouragement.