

"If Any Man Thinketh Himself ..."

"... to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord. But if any man is ignorant, let him be ignorant" (1 Cor. 14:37f).

Here Paul again affirms once more his inspiration and authority as an apostle. This is not the only place in this letter where he claims inspiration: he did so in the second chapter. Having quoted Isaiah 45:17, *"But as it is written, things which eye saw not, ear heard not, and which interred not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him,"* he said, *"unto us God revealed them through the Spirit" (2:9f).* He does so again in 1 Corinthians 7:40 and while other passages equally affirm his apostolic authority, none are more strongly worded (in this letter) than what he commands here: *"But if any man is ignorant, let him be ignorant."*

This section on spiritual gifts which encompasses chapters 12-14 begins with these words: *"Now concerning spiritual gifts."* The way he worded his introduction indicated that the Corinthians had written him posing questions concerning spiritual gifts. And, as he commences this long section, identifying the gifts, spelling out their duration and then, finally, the regulation of them, he said, *"I do not want you to be ignorant" (12:1).* The following extensive, inspired information was designed to eliminate the Corinthians' ignorance and misunderstanding of those gifts. But, if after all the information he had given them, they were still ignorant, they would have to remain so. None can make one have understanding if he does not want to understand, and possibly there were those in Corinth who might continue to use their gifts differently than God intended.

God has assured the sincere heart that it can know and understand His word. *"And ye shall seek for me, and ye shall find me, when ye shall seek for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).* To successfully find and know God man must seek with all his heart. Reserve a corner of one's heart for oneself and be assured such an one will never come to know God.

Some never understand because their heart is waxed gross. Isaiah wrote, *"By hearing ye shall hear and shall in no wise understand, and seeing ye shall see and in no wise perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and should turn again, and I should heal them" (Mt. 13:14f; Isa. 6:9f).*

Jehovah addressed this problem when he spoke to Ezekiel. Certain men approached the prophet, feigning to seek God's will. The Lord informed Ezekiel: *"Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?"* He then declared that whenever any one approached him (His word) with an idol in his heart, God would answer him according to the multitude of his idols (Ezek. 14:3-4). In other words, that man would find the answer he wanted to find.

Such ignorance is self-imposed. In his summary of the sins of the Gentiles Paul wrote, *"... that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God ... and even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind ..."* (Rom. 1:20-21, 28). Peter wrote of mockers who would come in latter days saying, *"Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning ... For this they willfully forget ..."* (2 Pet. 3:3, 5). Such are deliberately ignorant and intolerant of any who would point out both their error and inconsistencies. When the blind man, healed by Jesus was questioned by the Jews and had exposed the folly and vanity of their reasoning, they cast him out of their synagogue saying, *"Thou wast altogether born in sin and dost thou teach us?"* (Jn. 9:34). There is an old, yet eternally true adage which says, "There are none so blind as they who will not see."

If man loves his "idol," God allows him to continue in his ignorance. In Paul's words: *"But if any man is ignorant, let him be ignorant."*

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