

"You Came Behind In No Gift ..."

"I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus; that in everything ye were enriched in him, in all utterance and in knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye came behind in no gift ..." (1 Cor. 1:4-7a).

As is characteristically a trait of Paul, an expression of thanks is offered to God for those to whom he wrote. While the expression of "thanks" is not universal as is the "grace and peace" expressions; it appears in a majority of his letters, eight out of the thirteen. His thanks for these brethren was that they were richly endowed; that in everything they were enriched in him. He mentions two specific instances which showed their endowment; in all utterance and knowledge.

By utterance it is taken to mean the many who were gifted with tongues in Corinth. The gift of tongues was mentioned by Jesus in His commissioning the eleven: *"They shall speak with new tongues"* (Mk. 16:18-20). It was demonstrated by them on Pentecost when all the apostles spoke with other tongues as the *"Spirit gave them utterance"* (Acts 2:4). The household of Cornelius spoke with tongues, astonishing six Jewish brethren who came with Peter (Acts 10:34), and the twelve men who had known only the *"baptism of John"* but whose imperfect knowledge was corrected by Paul and upon whom Paul laid his hands, spoke with tongues (Acts 19:6-7). It may be implied that Samaritans also spoke with tongue upon whom Peter and John laid hands for while there is no specific mention of it, clearly there was a demonstration of some sort for Simon *"saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given"* (Acts 8:18). Certainly from the attention given to the "use" and "abuse" of tongues, that Paul later directs in this letter (chapters 12-14), the gift of tongues was much coveted by Corinthians and much exercised, it may be added.

These brethren were enriched in knowledge and while there were some who were lacking in knowledge, particularly in reference to the truth than *"an idol is nothing"* it is to be inferred that Corinth was a church in which the major part of brethren possessed knowledge, knowledge conferred by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 8:7). Tragically enough, the knowledge on the part of the brethren of the congregation had not spared brethren from many problems, emphasizing Paul's statement, *"Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth"* (1 Cor. 8:1).

These brethren had been enriched in all utterance and knowledge *"even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed"* in them. Is there any reason to

doubt that Paul spoke here of his "*entering in among them*" when he arrived in their city from Athens (Acts 18:1f)? The confirmation of the testimony of Christ was wrought by the miracles God gave His apostles and messengers to do and while Luke no mentions specific miracles wrought by Paul in Corinth, the historian does cite miracles of Paul along the way in all his journeys: at Pathos and Lystra in his first journey (Acts 13:9-11; 14:8-10); at Philippi on his second (Acts 16:16-18); and, at Ephesus on his third (Acts 19:10). Mark concluded his gospel writing with these words: "*And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen*" (Mk. 16:20).

So the Corinthians "*came behind in no gift.*" This was a blessing upon these Corinthians; they were in the afore mentioned matters, inferior to no church yet these words were no guarantee they were therein pleasing to God in their behavior. To the contrary, in many, many respects they were not. Their endowments did not spare them from pride and jealousy which had made them a quarreling, uncaring and egotistical church. But their knowledge did one thing: it removed an excuse for their unseemly behavior. Let us all beware.

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