

1 Corinthians 12:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?

Analysis

Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?—Mē pantes apostoloi; mē pantes prophētai; mē pantes didaskaloi; mē pantes dynameis;—the Greek particle mē (μή) expects a negative answer: "Not all are apostles, are they?" Paul's rhetorical questions (continuing v.30) hammer home gift-diversity. Not every believer is an apostle; not every Christian is a teacher. The Spirit distributes as He wills (v.11), not uniformly to all.

This demolishes two errors:

1. elitism—"superior Christians have all gifts, especially tongues"
2. egalitarianism—"all Christians should have the same gifts." God's design features specialization, not duplication.

A body needs one mouth, not multiple mouths competing to speak. This means some believers will never speak in tongues (v.30)—contradicting any theology demanding tongues as evidence of Spirit-baptism. Paul's questions refute the notion that any single gift should be universal among believers.

Historical Context

Some Corinthians apparently taught that tongues-speaking was essential proof of Spirit-baptism or spiritual maturity, creating pressure for all believers to manifest this gift. Paul's rhetorical questions show such teaching contradicts the Spirit's sovereign, diverse distribution.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How do these rhetorical questions refute the teaching that all Spirit-baptized believers must speak in tongues?
2. What pressure exists in your church context for believers to manifest certain gifts as 'proof' of maturity?
3. How can churches celebrate gift-diversity without creating pressure toward gift-uniformity?

Interlinear Text

μὴ	πάντες	ἀπόστολοι	μὴ	πάντες	προφῆται	μὴ
Are all	G3956	apostles	Are all	G3956	prophets	Are all
G3361		G652	G3361		G4396	G3361
πάντες	διδάσκαλοι	μὴ	πάντες	δυνάμεις		
G3956	teachers	Are all	G3956	workers of miracles		
	G1320	G3361		G1411		

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