

1 Corinthians 14:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

Analysis

Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts—Paul acknowledges their zēlōtai (ζηλωταί, "zealots, enthusiasts") for pneumatōn (πνευμάτων, "spirits" or "spiritual gifts"). **Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church**—Greek zēteite hina... perisseūete (ζητεῖτε ἵνα... περισσεύητε, "seek that you may abound") redirects their zeal toward oikodomē tēs ekklēsias (οἰκοδομή τῆς ἐκκλησίας, "edification of the church").

Paul doesn't quench their enthusiasm ("zealous") but redirects it toward the right goal ("edifying of the church"). The verb perisseuō ("abound, excel") suggests abundance, but abundance measured by edification, not personal experience. This verse summarizes verses 1-11: pursue gifts that build up the body.

Historical Context

The Corinthians' zeal for spiritual manifestations was misdirected toward self-glorification. Paul channels that energy toward corporate edification, the true measure of spiritual maturity.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How can zeal for spiritual gifts be both commendable and misguided?
2. What does it mean to 'excel' in edifying the church rather than in personal experience?
3. How should this principle guide our evaluation of worship practices and spiritual gifts?

Interlinear Text

οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐπεὶ ζηλωταί ἐστε πνευμάτων

so Even ye forasmuch as zealous ye are of spiritual
G3779 G2532 G5210 G1893 G2207 G2075 G4151

πρὸς τὴν οἰκοδομὴν τῆς ἐκκλησίας ζητεῖτε ἵνα

to G3588 the edifying G3619 G3588 of the church G1577 gifts seek that
G4314 G2212 G2443

περισσεύητε

ye may excel

G4052

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 14:26 (Parallel theme): How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

1 Corinthians 14:1 (Spirit): Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

1 Corinthians 12:31 (Parallel theme): But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.