



Thanks for looking at this sample issue of **Deeperstudy Newsletter!** **Deeperstudy Newsletter** will reach you every other Tuesday. Each issue will have two or three of the following regularly recurring features:

- **Thirsting for God** -short devotionals that are Bible-centered and Christ honoring
- **It's all Greek to me** - insights from the original languages of the Bible
- **Light from Within** - difficult passages cleared up by examining the context
- **Light from Without** - difficult passages illuminated by examining the cultural/historical background
- **A Helicopter View** - overviews of biblical books
- **Bible Atlas from Space** - a sequence of photos and/or diagrams moving from a satellite view of a biblical site to views close up
- **21st Century Psalmist** - original poetry intended to draw the human heart closer to its Lord
- **The Bible and the News** - current news items connect with relevant Scripture

In addition to these regular features, **Deeperstudy Newsletter** will also provide links to interesting parts of deeperstudy.com website. I will also include news about seminars I am scheduling and give special discounts on the books and e-books I have written.

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Bible Atlas from Space: Athens

Athens, Greece is the site of the 2004 Summer Olympics. It also was a prominent city in the first-century Roman Empire. Paul stopped there on his second missionary journey, as recorded in Acts 17. His famous speech on the Areopagus ("Mars Hill") is a model of Christian apologetics. View the [Athens vicinity](#). Then zoom in to see what the Acropolis, the Areopagus, and the Agora look like both in ancient times and today.

Thinking Deeper: Why did he become a traitor?

Ever heard of Ahithophel? He was a counselor to King David around 1000 BCE. You might even call him Secretary of Defense. Yet when David's son Absalom rebelled against his father, Ahithophel betrayed his king and long-time friend and joined in

the conspiracy. Have you ever wondered why? And what lessons does this tragic saga have for us today?

"It's all Greek to me!" – The greater gifts

In ancient Greek, the original language of the New Testament, we can usually tell the difference between a description (expressed by the indicative mood) and a command (expressed the imperative mood) by the way a verb is spelled. Sometimes, however, the spelling is exactly the same, making a verse ambiguous.

Such is the case with First Corinthians 12:31, where the NIV renders the verse as a command: "But eagerly desire the greater gifts." This takes the word translated "eagerly desire" (zeloute) as a second person, plural, active imperative. Because this verb is a contract verb, however, the second person, plural, active indicative has the same spelling. This alternative is rendered in the NIV footnote: "But you are eagerly desiring."

What difference do these alternatives make in the context? On the one hand, if the imperative were what Paul intended, then he would seem to be encouraging the Corinthian saints to strive to climb the ladder toward spiritual elitism. Not satisfied with a lowly gift each was given by God, they should seek something better, greater, perhaps some gift more fulfilling. Is this really what Paul is recommending? I don't think so.

On the other hand, if the indicative is the correct rendering, then Paul is pointing out what the Christians in Corinth are haggling about. In an unspiritual spirit of competition, they are playing one-upsmanship, each trying to outdo the other in spiritual accomplishments. This seems to fit the context much better. Far from encouraging such rivalry, Paul would be pointing it out as proof that the Corinthians are still worldly in their thinking and in their interaction.

Only the indicative seems properly to prepare the way for chapter 13. Rather than striving for the greater gifts, the Corinthians ought to be trying to outdo one another in showing love. For as Paul goes on to point out, exercising spiritual gifts infinitely greater than any possessed by the Corinthians would still be pointless without love.

Of course, in chapter 14, Paul does recommend that those who possessed the gift of tongues should pray for the ability to prophesy. But that is after he has carefully explained why prophesying is superior to speaking in tongues. In the topsy-turvy spiritual kingdom in which servants are great and the greatest are slaves of all, prophesying beats tongues speaking, because of its ability to build others up. But in chapter 12, Paul's point seems to be accepting and using the gift God has given rather than seeking another.

The rendering in the NIV footnote seems to have more in its favor than the rendering in the text. This is a case where knowing the original language does not help us to clarify what is ambiguous in English. The ambiguity exists in the original. We can, however, ex-amine the two alternatives more closely and gain an insight we might have missed otherwise.

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