

Chapter Twelve

In Chapter Twelve Paul returned to the list of items that the Corinthians had asked about (1st Cor. 12:1 cf. 7:1; 8:1). The development on spiritual gifts encompasses all of chapters twelve and fourteen. The great love passage (1st Cor. 13) is an integral part of this spiritual gift teaching. Chapter twelve contains a prologue (vv.1-3), a discourse on varieties and sameness (vv.4-11), a long metaphor on the Church as a body (vv.12-27), and a specific outline of spiritual gifts with reference to their functional priorities (vv.28-31).

Prologue

1. Περὶ δὲ introduces another subject of inquiry where Paul is providing guidance to the Corinthians (1st Cor. 12:1 cf. 7:1; 8:1).
 - a. Paul has already defined οἱ πνευματικοί as non-carnal believers (1st Cor. 2:12-3:4), but some in Corinth had taken the term to refer to only certain believers with ecstatic experiences (1st Cor. 14:37).
 - b. Paul's message on "the spirituals" will emphasize the spirituality of all believers, and the necessity of every gift for the edification of the body (1st Cor. 12-14).
 - c. Ignorance is not acceptable in any area of doctrine, but it is particularly dangerous in realms that directly involve demonic powers or areas of study that pertain to the end times (eschatology) (1st Cor. 10:1; 11:3; 12:1; 14:38; 2nd Cor. 1:8; Rom. 1:13; 11:25; Col. 2:1; 1st Thess. 4:13; 2nd Pet. 3:8).
2. As unbelievers (pagans) the Corinthians were subject to "getting carried away" (1st Cor. 12:2).
 - a. Demons carried them away to mute idols.
 - b. As believers, the Corinthians must guard against "getting carried away." We have a new leading spirit—the leading of the Holy Spirit Who guides us to the speaking Lord (cf. Heb. 1:1-2; Jn. 14:26; 16:13-15; 1st Jn. 2:18-27).
3. Paul was concerned for the Corinthians' vulnerability to so-called prophets (1st Cor. 12:3).
 - a. Propensity for teacher schisms (1st Cor. 1:10-12).
 - b. Warnings regarding prophets (1st Cor. 14:37-38).
 - c. Embracing abusive leaders (2nd Cor. 11:4,13-15,20).
 - d. A simple test provides for the identification of such problems (1st Cor. 12:3). The content of their message must be consistent with the revealed Word of God. The "ecstatic experience" itself is not proof.

The truly spiritual is not marked by a being swept away...that was precisely the characteristic of your previous fanatical religion." It is important to notice that Paul places this valuation of the spiritually "sweeping" at the very outset of his treatment of "spiritual things" in Corinth. As the superscription to his essay in chapters twelve to fourteen Paul has written: Seizure is not necessarily Christian or paramountly spiritual. Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 286-87.

Varieties and Sameness

1. The varieties are distributions.
 - a. διαίρεσις nom.fem.plur. διαίρεσις ^{#1243}: *apportionment, division*. (Diaeresis is a linguistic term used when vowels are to be divided into syllables rather than combined in a diphthong. Joe vs. Zoë.)
 - b. God does the distributing (διαίρέω ^{#1244} Lk. 15:12; 1st Cor. 12:11), and the variety of His children serve His purpose.
 - c. An interesting OT (LXX) use is for the division of the disputed child brought to Solomon (1st Kgs. 3:25,26), but the predominant OT use (LXX) is for the divisions of the Levitical Priesthood for their service (1st Chr. 23:6; 24:3,4,5; 2nd Chr. 35:5,10).
 - d. Difference or variety are within the range for this noun, but mainly within secular contexts (Plato, Sophocles, Lucian, Epictetus, Tatian, Athenagoras).

2. English translations.

Darby	distinctions of gifts	distinctions of services	distinctions of operations
ASV, YLT	diversities of gifts	diversities of ministrations	diversities of workings
AV 1873, KJV 1611	diversities of gifts	differences of administrations	diversities of operations
CEV	different kinds of spiritual gifts	different ways to serve	each do different things
ESV	varieties of gifts	varieties of service	varieties of activities
GNT	different kinds of spiritual gifts	different ways of serving	different abilities to perform service
HCSB	different gifts	different ministries	different activities
ISV	varieties of gifts	varieties of ministries	varieties of results
NET	different gifts	different ministries	different results
NABWRNT	different kinds of spiritual gifts	different forms of service	different workings
NASB, NASB-95	varieties of gifts	varieties of ministries	varieties of effects
NIV	different kinds of gifts	different kinds of service	different kinds of working
NKJV	diversities of gifts	differences of ministries	diversities of activities
NRSV	varieties of gifts	varieties of services	varieties of activities
RSV	varieties of gifts	varieties of services	varieties of working

Now, there are different distributions of spiritual gifts, these gifts being diverse from one another, but there is the same Spirit. And there are different distributions of various kinds of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are different distributions of divine energy motivating these gifts in their operation, but the same God who by His divine energy operates them all in their sphere. But to each one there is constantly being given the clearly seen operations of the Spirit with a view to the profit [of all]. Kenneth Wuest Expanded Translation

3. Three items are distributed, creating tremendous variety in the Church.

- Gifts. Διαιρέσεις δὲ χαρισμάτων. Gen.pl. χάρισμα ^{#5486}: a gift disposed on the basis of χάρις ^{#5485} (grace). Plural χαρίσματα.
- Ministries. καὶ διαιρέσεις διακονιών. Gen.pl. διακονία ^{#1248}: *service, ministry*. Plural διακονίαι. Note: two believers with the same χαρίσματα may have widely different διακονίαι. The reverse is also true: two believers with the same διακονίαι may have entirely different χαρίσματα.
- Effects. καὶ διαιρέσεις ἐνεργημάτων. Gen.pl. ἐνέργημα ^{#1755}: activity as expression of capability, *activity*. Plural ἐνεργήματα. Note: two believers with identical χαρίσματα and identical διακονίαι may still find themselves engaged in entirely different ἐνεργήματα.

4. Gifts.

- Our present stewardship of the Church features grace/spiritual gifts (χαρίσματα charismata ^{Strong's #5486} & πνευματικά pneumatika ^{Strong's #4152}) given on a universal basis.
- A pattern for the Dispensation of the Church is found in the Gospels when Jesus Christ sends out His disciples two by two (Matt. 10:8). Freely you received, freely give is the principle of grace orientation that underlies all χαρίσματα (Rom. 12:6; 1st Pet. 4:10).
- Gifts are given and received (Phil. 4:5) on a grace basis but never earned or worked for (Rom. 11:6). Neither can they be revoked (Rom. 11:29).
- Congregations having believers utilizing their spiritual gifts are solid local churches (Rom. 1:11).
- For believers in the Dispensation of the Church, gifts of the Holy Spirit lead to ministries for Jesus Christ as activities of the Father's work (Eph. 3:7-10).
- The Holy Spirit gives gifts to believers, but Jesus Christ gives gifted believers to local churches (Eph. 4:7-8).
- Spiritual gifts can be neglected (1st Tim. 4:14) and need to be frequently kindled afresh (2nd Tim. 1:6).

5. Ministries.

- a. Ministries are to be shared with others in a reckoned fraternity (Acts 1:17,25).
- b. Ministries should be a special devotion that is freed from unnecessary distraction (Acts 6:4; 1st Cor. 16:15).
- c. Ministries can be financially supported by others who cannot join in the active work (Acts 11:29-30; 2nd Cor. 8:4).
- d. Ministries end when their season is complete (Acts 12:25).
- e. The victorious finishing of one's course is equated with successful completion of one's life-ministry (Acts 20:24).
- f. A ministry is work that needs local-church equipping (Eph. 4:12).
- g. Ministries must be volitionally fulfilled (Col. 4:7; 2nd Tim. 4:5).
- h. "Losing heart" is the primary danger which can prematurely kill a ministry (2nd Cor. 4:1).
- i. Ministries may be discredited (2nd Cor. 6:3).
- j. Ministries are assigned based upon faithfulness (1st Tim. 1:12).

6. Effects.

- a. This family of terms includes ἐνέργεια ^{#1753}, ἐνεργέω ^{#1754}, ἐνέργημα ^{#1755}, & ἐνεργής ^{#1756}.
- b. The "effects" (ἐνεργήματα) are provided by the Father who "works" (ἐνεργέω) all things in all circumstances (1st Cor. 12:6).
- c. It is the Father who is at work in you (Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:29).
- d. Gifts supplied by the Holy Spirit and ministries directed by Jesus Christ require the effectual working of God the Father (Gal. 2:8; Eph. 3:7; 1st Cor. 12:4-6).
- e. The "effective service" is achieved through faithfulness in the angelic conflict (1st Cor. 16:9). There is another "father" who is actively at work in this κόσμος (Eph. 2:2; 2nd Thess. 2:7,9).
- f. The Father's working power is a dimension of the Christian Way of Life that requires much prayer and study to fully know (Eph. 1:18-19). Ultimately, this working power is beyond our ability to fully know (Eph. 3:20).
- g. It is the Father's "effects" working through believers that holds together the whole body (Eph. 4:16).
- h. The Father's working power is a function of the priesthood function of prayer (Jas. 5:16).
- i. The effective work of God becomes vital when the ministry becomes a manifestation of death and life (2nd Cor. 4:10-12).

7. Examples.

- a. The χάρισμα or χαρίσματα that each believer receives is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. φανέρωσις ^{#5321}: *manifestation* fr. φαίνω ^{#5316}: *to shine* and φανερός ^{#5318}: *apparent, manifest; plainly recognised or known*. Trench discusses (§ [xciv](#)) ἀποκάλυψις, ἐπιφάνεια, φανέρωσις.
- b. The Holy Spirit is manifest through each gifted believer for the "common good." τὸ συμφέρον pres.act.ptc. συμφέρω ^{#4851} "Profitable" (1st Cor. 6:12; 10:23). Common good = profitable edification of the church.
- c. Parings and coordination of gifts cooperatively edify the entire church.
 - 1) Word of Wisdom and Word of Knowledge (1st Cor. 12:8) provided foundational teaching for the Church throughout the period of New Testament composition.
 - 2) Faith-working and Healing (1st Cor. 12:9) provided authentication for ministries where the New Testament Books were being written.
 - 3) Power-working, Prophecy, Discerning Spirits, Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues (1st Cor. 12:10) should have all been recognized by Israel as signs of the Lord's working (1st Cor. 14:22; Jn. 3:2; Isa. 28:1-29 esp. vv.11-13; Joel 2:28-29).

8. Distributing according to His Will (1st Cor. 12:11).

- a. Individually distributed. διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστω.
- b. Collectively achieving His will. καθὼς βούλεται.

The Church as a Body

1. The trinity of gifts, ministries, and workings is followed by a trinity of explanatory statements. γὰρ (v.12), καὶ γὰρ (v.13), καὶ γὰρ (v.14).
2. The metaphor of the Church as a Body (1st Cor. 12:12-27) is fundamentally a metaphor about the Lord Jesus Christ (1st Cor. 12:12).
 - a. Καθάπερ (even as) . . . οὕτως καὶ (so also).
 - b. Bullinger's [Figures of Speech](#) details the as . . . so principles of Scripture.
 - c. Not "so also is the Church," but "so also is Christ."
3. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit baptized us all into one body, and in this process supplied us with the same spiritual drink (1st Cor. 12:13).
 - a. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit places us eternally "in Christ."
 - b. The drink of the HS provides us our eternal indwelling of the Holy Spirit including among other things our spiritual gift.
4. The Body is not one member, but many (1st Cor. 12:12,14).
 - a. σῶμα ^{#4983}: *body* (1st Cor. 5:3; 6:13_{x2},15,16,18_{x2},19,20; 7:4_{x2},34; 9:27; 10:16,17; 11:24,27,29; 12:12_{x3},13,14,15_{x2},16_{x2},17,18,19,20,22,23,24,25,27; 13:3; 15:35,37,38_{x2},40_{x2},44_{x3}).
 - b. μέλος ^{#3196}: *member, limb* (1st Cor. 6:15_{x3}; 12:12_{x2},14,18,19,20,22,25,26_{x4},27).
5. No Member in contrast with any other Member is any less a part of the Body (1st Cor. 12:15-17).
 - a. The foot is not inferior to the hand and neither member is any more a part of the Body than the other (1st Cor. 12:15).
 - b. The ear is not inferior to the eye and neither Member is any more a part of the Body than the other (1st Cor. 12:16).
 - c. Each Member is necessary in order for that role in the Body to be fulfilled (1st Cor. 12:17).
6. It is God's wisdom to craft the Body and to place each Member (1st Cor. 12:18).
7. The Members cannot be one—they collectively form one Body (1st Cor. 12:19).
8. The Body metaphor teaches several important principles (1st Cor. 12:20-26).
 - a. No Member of the Body is unnecessary (v.21).
 - b. The Members which may seem weaker are very necessary (v.22).
 - c. Certain Members of the Body by their very nature need special covering (vv.23-24a).
 - d. The covered Members are actually more honored in that their uncovering is intended to be significant (vv.24b).
 - e. The entire Body ought not be divided; indeed it cannot be divided. The Body is harmed and/or benefited as each Member is harmed and/or benefited (vv.25-26).
9. Y'all are collectively Christ's Body, and individually Members of it (1st Cor. 12:27). .
10. Illustration with the human body. (Data from innerbody.com & en.wikipedia.org)
 - a. 206 bones in the skeletal system. Includes 22 in the skull, 54 in the hands, and 52 in the feet.
 - b. More than 600 muscles in the muscular system. Muscles are made up of millions of tiny protein filaments. Each muscle is served by nerves which link the muscle to the brain and spinal cord. Remember the 27 bones in each hand? Those bones work with over 60 muscles in each hand.
 - c. Other systems include: digestive, lymphatic, endocrine, nervous, cardiovascular, reproductive, and urinary.
 - d. The complexity in design for the human body is miraculous in its testimony to the creator (Ps. 139:14).
Super essay available online: <http://www.leaderu.com/science/bishop.html>.

Functional Priorities

1. Paul resumes the theme of gifts, ministries, and effects (1st Cor. 12:4-6 cf. 27-31) with an admonition from the Body metaphor (1st Cor. 12:27 cf. 12-26).
2. The previous “listing” (1st Cor. 12:8-10) was by way of example for the varieties of gifts, ministries, and effects (1st Cor. 12:7,11).
3. This “listing” is prioritized on a functional basis (1st Cor. 12:28).
 - a. πρῶτον, δεύτερον, τρίτον, ἔπειτα (first, second, third, & then) demonstrates how the Word of God has pre-eminence in the Church.
 - b. The priorities God exhibited serve to exemplify priorities the Church ought to maintain.
4. The priority list of gifts, ministries, and effects.
 - a. The πρῶτον gift & ministry were the Apostles.
 - b. The δεύτερον gift & ministry were the Prophets & Prophetesses.
 - c. The τρίτον gifts & ministries were the Teachers. This would include the “variety” of gifts particularly suited for a Teaching ministry. (Pastor-Teachers, Evangelists, Teachers, Exhorter/Encourager/Comforters).
 - d. The ἔπειτα gifts & ministries consisted of everything else not previously listed.
5. The emphasis on function is hammered home through 7 rhetorical questions (1st Cor. 12:29-30).
 - a. Note that function does not entail superiority or inferiority.
 - b. The church is not mono-gifted.
6. The development on gifts is placed on hold while Paul demonstrates “a more excellent way” (1st Cor. 12:31).
 - a. “Earnestly desire the greater gifts” can be either indicative or imperative.
 - 1) ζηλώω ^{#2206}. [EDNT](#) has a great summary.
 - 2) Greater is either μέγας ^{#3173} (CR.) or κρείττων ^{#2909} (TR).
 - b. I show you a still more excellent way. καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν.