

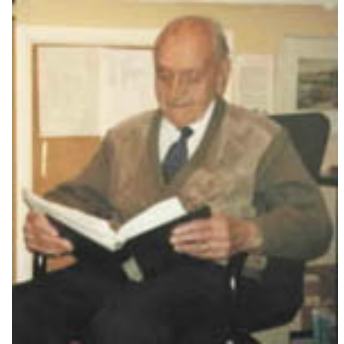
1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER TWELVE

Excerpts from *Stuart Allen's Book: "Early and Pastoral Epistles of Paul"*.

Edited by Jan Lilleby

Introduction

Stuart Allen was a very competent Bible expositor, having been a successor to Charles Welch. I find it particularly timely in these days to publish his Bible knowledge regarding the *Spiritual Miracle Gifts* told in 1 Cor. 12. Thus we learn of how these sign gifts had its place only during the Acts period. Such miracle gifts/sign gifts, have never been with this present dispensation, the one with the Church, the One New Man as taught by Paul in Ephesians and Colossians. The Church has never had any baptism in the Holy Spirit, tongues, interpretation of tongues; nor prophecy, - or any healing gifts or power workings to raise dead or drive out demons...and so on and so forth.



Please note:

In transferring this writing from Stuart Allen's book, the reader will note that there are quite a few unwanted tab-spaces in the lines. This has to do with the format of my website, for which I apologize! This paper will give you 12 pages out of your printer.

Paul now commences an important section dealing with spiritual gifts. It is clear that the Corinthian church had an abundance of these gifts, and this in spite of their carnal state. To teach that the possession of these gifts today is a mark of spirituality, or of some special filling of the Spirit, is quite contrary to Scriptural facts, as we shall see. It is possible that the believers at Corinth had raised the matter concerning gifts in their communication with him.

As this matter was directly connected with their public worship, the Apostle now deals with it.

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that when ye were Gentiles ye were led away unto those dumb idols, howsoever ye might be led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking in the Spirit of God sayeth, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit"

(12:1-3). The word "gifts" is not in the original; it could be rendered "spiritual matters", but as the context makes clear that it is special gifts of the Holy Spirit which are being discussed, it is better to supply the word "gifts". There was evidently a large Gentile section in the Corinthian assembly, for the Apostle refers to their pre-conversion days as idolaters under the domination of the evil Satanic spirits that were behind the dumb idols they worshipped.

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While redemption had delivered them from this bondage, it was a mistake to suppose that there was no danger now from satanic activity. In one sense these gifts constituted a danger, for Paul makes it clear in this epistle and the one that was to follow, that Satan, as an angel of light, can travesty these gifts and so deceive the unwary. It is quite wrong to imagine that the great enemy of God and His children, gave believers a holiday, as it were, till the second century with its developed Gnosticism. The battle between light and darkness never ceases, and the error that the Apostle combated at Colossae, the warnings contained in the Pastoral epistles and the command of the Apostle John to "test the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4: 1) and that the spirit

of antichrist
was already present (2: 18), show quite clearly that this
was so, and
therefore the danger existed of being led astray.
We wish that those today who are anxious to bring back some
of
these gifts, in particular tongue speaking, would bear in
mind the
danger of what they are seeking to do.
In New Testament times ecstatic heathen worship was a fact,
as
it is still today in dark centers of heathendom. Paul either
knew
that this had already entered the Corinthian church, or
there was
the possibility of it doing so.
Thus he states categorically that no one under the influence
of
God's Spirit can say that Jesus is accursed, nor would
anyone
under satanic domination own His lordship, for this is the
very
thing that Satan covets for himself, and he certainly would
not
allow any of his dupes to advertise the supremacy of Christ!
It seems clear that the Apostle had the worship of the
assembly
in mind in this long section dealing with spiritual gifts,
which
occupies this chapter and also chapters thirteen and
fourteen. In
consequence, he is not referring to every day speech
(although
what he said would cover this) but speech in the assembly,
which
would be either under the guidance of God, or under satanic
influence. Anyone of course at any time could pronounce the
words "Lord Jesus", whether saved or unsaved, but no one in
the
assembly's worship could use this phrase in teaching or
witness
and be under the control of the evil one.

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Having made this clear, Paul now goes on to discuss the
spiritual
gifts themselves:
"There are distributions of gifts, but the same Spirit;
there are
distributions of services, and the same Lord; and there are
distribu-
tions of operations, but the same God who operates all
things in all

men. To each one is given his own manifestation of the Spirit, with a view to mutual profit. For to one there is given, through the Spirit, a word of wisdom; to another, in accordance with the same Spirit, a word of knowledge; to another faith, in the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing, in the one Spirit; to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the power to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these things the same one Spirit puts into operation, distributing individually to each one as He wills" (1 Cor.12:4-11).

There is no difficulty with the main theme of this section. Note

that Spirit, Lord and God are used interchangeably. However varied the gifts may be, they have one source, the Holy Spirit of

God. They were not distributed to give any feeling of superiority, but for the mutual profit of the whole church (verse 7). Just as there

was no uniformity of experience, neither was there of gifts. Nor

were these gifts the privilege of the few who had had some special

spiritual experience. To each one of the assemblies is given his own manifestation of the Spirit (verse 7) and the Spirit divided these

gifts exactly "as He willed". No believer was responsible for the

kind of gift he received, but he was certainly responsible for the

way he used it, which primarily was meant for the Lord's glory and

the common good. In view of the attempts to revive tongue speak-

ing today apart from the gifts as a whole, it is significant that Paul

puts speaking in tongues at the bottom of the list. Furthermore, he

nowhere teaches that tongue speaking was a gift which the Holy

Spirit gave to every believer, or that it was an evidence of spiritual

maturity. It was probably coveted by some because of its outward

showiness, but the Apostle commences with one that is infinitely more important, but without any external attraction, that of wisdom. Why? Because wisdom is fundamental in the practical out-working of any gift or service for the Lord. Who is going to give away anything of real value to foolish people who will only misuse it? It is noteworthy that, in his prayer for the Ephesian believer

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Paul again puts wisdom first (Eph. 1:17). "If any man lack wisdom (and we all do to some extent) let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally ... " (James 1:5), so there is no excuse for any believer to remain foolish, or to think or act foolishly. This only hinders the Truth, and lets the Lord down before an unbelieving world.

The next evidential gift of the Spirit in chapter 12 is knowledge.

That this was given without human mediation is clear by the context, where all the gifts come directly from the Spirit of God. 1

John 2:20 refers to this by saying, "But ye have an unction (anointing) from the Holy One (i.e. The Holy Spirit) and ye. know all things". And again in 2:27, "But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you."

One of the gifts of the ascended Christ for His Body is "teachers" (Eph, 4:11), but there is no mention in this epistle of

any supernatural gift of knowledge without human effort, such as existed in the church at Corinth. We may wish there was such today, but now we find we have to search the Scriptures patiently, comparing spiritual things with spiritual; we need to pray for enlightenment too before such Divine knowledge becomes our personal possession. While there were teachers in the churches during the period covered by the Acts, it is evident that some who

had the special gift of knowledge were independent of them, though not in a schismatic sense, for the will of God was for all to work together as members of a body, in united witness. Faith is the next special gift, and it is obvious this cannot be the initiatory faith of the sinner believing in Christ as Savior, for such a faith would be possessed by all true believers. It would be rather the faith of the pioneer, willing to undertake new and possibly difficult work for Christ, not only in the assembly, but outside. We have a modern example of this in George Muller and his work for destitute children. Now follows gifts of healing, and the Acts is full of concrete examples of this. (Acts 3:7,8; 4:16,30; 5:15,16; 8:6,7; 9:33,34; 14:8-10; 19:11,12; 28:8,9). Note that the healing was instantaneous and complete, and we may be sure that there was no relapse! When

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modern healing campaigns are compared to this, their pitiful inadequacy is only too obvious. And yet they claim to be fulfilling the same ministry as obtained in the Acts! How folk can be so duped as to believe this only goes to show the utter ignorance of the New Testament that abounds today. The healing ministry we are dealing with has its roots in the Old Testament in God's promises to Israel: " ... If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God ... I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians..." (Exod.15:26). "And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and He shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee" (Exod.23:25). "Thou shalt be blessed above all people: ... and the Lord will take away from thee all sickness..." (Deut. 7:14,15). There is no doubt that definite Divine healing was promised

to
this earthly people of God. This was repeated in the Lord's
com-
mission of the Twelve to Israel:

" And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at
hand.

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out
demons..." (Matt. 10:7,8).

This very healing ministry was also performed by the Lord
day

by day, as the Gospel records clearly show, and the same
ministry

continues without a break till Israel is laid aside at the
end of the

Acts. After this, Paul's healing ministry, so effective
before (see

Acts 19:11,12), now no longer obtains (Phil. 2:25-27; 1Tim.
5:23; 2

Tim. 4:20).

This divine healing was one of the foretastes of the coming
earthly kingdom, where there will not only be abundant
spiritual

blessing but physical health and blessing as well. If we are
aiming

for truth and not wishful thinking, we shall keep this
ministry

where the Bible places it - with Israel and God's earthly
kingdom

purposes. To wrench it from this setting as so many have
done is to

get difficulty, and disillusionment, as well as confusion in
our

understanding of the Divine plan of the ages.

The next of the Spirit's evidential gifts is the working of

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miracles, and again there is no need to argue as to what
today can

be regarded as miraculous. The Acts of the Apostles is full
of what

the Holy Spirit means by the working of miracles and the
following

Scriptures should be carefully verified as they are too long
to quote

in full here (Acts 2:22,43; 4:29,30; 5: 12; 6:8; 8:5-7,39;
9:37-41; 12:7;

13:10,11; 14:3; 16:16-18,25,26; 20:9-11; 28:3-9).

There can be no doubt that we do not live in such an age
today.

The power to work such miracles was another earthly kingdom
evidence, and to some at Corinth this divine gift was given
by the

Holy Spirit. There is another reference to this gift in

Paul's early

letter to the Galatians:

"He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh

miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the

hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:5).

It is important to note that these miracles were not just displays

of great power which overwhelmed or stupefied those who saw them. They were signs, that is they signified and gave a special

message; hence their evidential value to Israel who had the coun-

tersign, the Old Testament Scriptures.

The reader who has carefully perused the above list of refer-

ences, cannot fail to note the number of times the word "sign" is

connected with the word "miracle".

The Apostle follows this gift with that of prophecy, and it is

important to remember that a Bible prophet was a forth-teller as

well as being a foreteller. Prophets in the New Testament were

linked with apostles as a foundation ministry by the risen Christ

(Eph, 4: 11), and this was essential for the delivery of truth to God's

people until the great foundation of inspired Scripture was com-

plete, through which God could speak to men and meet every need

by the Holy Spirit's enlightenment. No further additions to God's

completed Word are necessary or can be allowed. Our task is the

proclamation of this completed revelation, and we no longer need

the ministry either of the apostle or prophet, the sure foundation

now being the Word of God and the Christ of the Word.

The ministry of the prophet during the Acts ranked high in the

Apostle Paul's estimation (1 Cor. 14:3-5) in importance above the gift of tongues.

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In view of the satanic spirit of deception concerning which Christ so clearly warned (Matt. 24:4,5,11,24 and see 2 Thess.

2:7-10), a divine gift of discrimination was needed at this

time to distinguish the true from the false; thus discerning of spirits was an important gift and we have already seen the Apostle John's command to test the spirits in view of false prophets (1 John 4:1-3).

Thus those who claimed to give a word of wisdom, or knowledge, or prophecy could be infallibly sorted out as to whether their utterances were actuated by the Spirit of God or by some satanic and demonic power.

The last on Paul's list is tongues and their interpretation.

We shall have more to say about this gift when we reach chapter fourteen where the Apostle deals with tongue speaking and its proper place in the assembly, so that everything could be done

"decently and in order".

The Apostle now stresses the source of all gifts - the Holy Spirit

Himself who is sovereign in his distribution of them:

"But all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each

one severally even as He will" (12:11).

He alone chooses what gift each believer should have, so that none

should have ground either for boasting or for being inferior. Nor

were they given just to the "spiritual". All were necessary at this

time for the great earthly kingdom testimony. This naturally leads

to the thought of the Pentecostal church as a whole and what the

working of every part could achieve for the Lord. What better

illustration could be given than a human body, with its various

members working together harmoniously for the body and the person as a whole?

This illustration was by no means unique. It was frequently employed in the ancient world and we find allusions to it in Soc-

rates, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, and Marcus Antoninus. The Apostle writes:

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is the

Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12).

The Authorized Version and Revised Version omit the expressed definite article before "Christ". Many expositors can see that

"the Christ" cannot refer just to Christ personally, for how can He

be likened to a human body which has uncomely as well as comely

parts? (verse 23). "Christ" (Christos) means anointed, and "the

Christ" can be used as the title of a church which has been specially anointed. The believers to whom the Apostle John wrote

were told "Ye have an anointing" (chrisma) (1 John 20,27), and

this gave them the supernatural gift of knowledge which we have

already seen is contained in the list detailed in verses 8-10 of the

chapter with which we are dealing. In his second letter to the

Corinthian church the Apostle wrote:

"Now He that confirmeth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed

us (chrio), is God" (2 Cor.1:21).

This "anointing" is very much to the point in 1 Corinthians 12:12. Moreover, the above reference acquaints us with the fact

that these supernatural gifts were confirmatory in character as well

as being signs. The teaching then in 1 Corinthians 12:12 is clear.

Just as a human body has many members, and each member has a particular part to play, not independently, but for the well-being of

the body as a whole, so should the Corinthian assembly have functioned. The cliques which had come into being at Corinth and

the misusing of some of the spiritual gifts were rendering this unity

null and void in practice, and it is this unity which was so important

and which Paul has stressed from various angles.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we

be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all

made to drink into one Spirit" (12:13).

To be baptized into a special company was no new truth. We have already had the baptism of all Israel unto Moses in 1 Corin-

thians ten, and this baptism was a spiritual baptism without

water,
which united them with Moses and all for which He stood, and had
its origin in God's action, not in anything that Israel did. So it is
here. The words "baptized" and "made to drink" are in the aorist
tense denoting that the action is past (not something future to be
sought) and was true of all believers at that time irrespective of
their condition. It was an action never to be repeated, being the
work of the Holy Spirit.

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It cannot refer to water baptism, for Paul had already told the
Corinthians that water baptism did not form part of His Christ-
directed ministry (1 Cor. 1:17), and no kind of water baptism would
ever effect this spiritual unity of the believer with God. Nothing
less than the Holy Spirit's work could do this. Such a unity cer-
tainly did not depend upon the work of man in carrying out any
external ritual.

In proceeding with the illustration of a human body, Paul stresses the inter-dependence of the various members. We have
seen that this usage of the word "body" was not confined to the
Scriptures. In spite of a superficial likeness, the Apostle is not
describing the Body of Christ, yet to be revealed in all its fullness
after the Acts in Ephesians and Colossians. At this time it was still
a secret, hid in God from all past ages and generations of people
(Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:26) and there is not a hint in these
Corinthian epistles, or for that matter in any epistle written during
the Acts, that such a secret of God is being unfolded. In fact the
word mystery (secret) is not used once to designate the church
individually or as a whole, such as it is used later on after Acts 28 in
Ephesians and Colossians. If we carefully note the language of 1
Corinthians twelve and Romans twelve, we shall note

differences from Ephesians. One which should be obvious is that the one Body of Ephesians is distinguished from Christ as the Head. The likeness of the Corinthian church to a human body and its members, speaks of eyes, ears and nose, all members of the human head and illustrative of those in the Corinthian church (verses 17-24). Every member of the Body of Christ in Ephesians is "accepted in the Beloved", but the body of 1 Corinthians twelve has "uncomely" parts which certainly is not true of the former. If Paul is teaching here Ephesian truth, then he is using the figure of a human body in a very careless way and we cannot accept this for a moment. Moreover, he asserts in Ephesians that the Church related to the Mystery is a 'joint-Body' (sussoma), a unique word (3:6). No such body, where every member is equal in size and importance had ever existed before, either naturally or spiritually. It never occurs in any Acts epistle, and in fact could not be used while the position at this time symbolized by the olive tree (Israel) and the wild grafts (Gentiles), was true (Rom. 11:16-24, and note verses 18

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and 22). We should also realize that the gifts set by God in the Corinthian assembly are different from those of Ephesians 4: 11, insomuch that gifts of healing, helps, governments and diversities of tongues are omitted in the Ephesian list, healings and tongues being specially linked, as we have seen again and again, with the earthly kingdom ministry of which Israel is the centre and form no part of the heavenly calling of Ephesians. Apostles, prophets, and teachers are repeated after Acts twenty-eight which shows clearly that there is a definite selection by the Holy Spirit, repeating what

was continuous, and leaving out that which was transitory, for so many of these Acts gifts were such, and never intended to be permanent (1 Cor. 3:8). The whole point of Paul's argument concerning these gifts is that no one is responsible for the kind of gift he has, and even if some are more important, all are necessary for the proper functioning of the assembly in Christian witness. None should feel any sense of superiority or inferiority whatever gift he possesses, and all should lead, above all, to unity. After showing the diversity in unity of the human body, he says: "Now you are Christ's body, and, individually members" (12:27 C.K. Barrett). Both the Authorized Version and Revised Version translate "Now ye are the body of Christ", but there is no definite article in the Greek. We cannot translate it baldly "you are a body of Christ", for this does not give the sense. The only way is, as Dr. C.K. Barrett renders it, "you are Christ's body". At first sight this seems to upset the distinction between the Pentecostal church and the Body of Christ after the Acts period, but we should ask ourselves, how could one of the many assemblies existing at this time be The Body of Christ? What of the rest? Paul uses the phrase "one body" again in Romans and this helps us to understand the usage of the word "body" in the Acts as applied to believers. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). Note he did not say "we are the one Body OF Christ", but "one body (of believers) in Christ", which is a very different thing and shows the standing by grace of the Roman church in Christ. So with the Corinthian assembly. They were a company (body) of believers

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belonging to Christ (Christ's body); like all the other churches; they were not part of the sussoma, the joint-Body of which Christ is the Head. Nothing is said about the Headship of Christ in

these

Acts epistles. If we are absolutely accurate in our reading and note

just what the Apostle wrote under inspiration, not adding in our

minds what was to be revealed later, we shall have no difficulty

with this context, or try to identify what God has made to differ.

Nor need we be concerned with the old jibe that this teaches there

are two Bodies of Christ, for this would only be true if they existed

at the same time. Of course this is not so, for the sussoma, the

Joint-Body of Christ was not revealed till after Israel failed at Acts

28, thus superseding the Acts period position.

The God-given human gifts of ministry commence with the foundation work of apostles and prophets. As we have seen, these

were necessary to lay the foundation of truth until the written

Word of God was complete and then the completed inspired Word

took over. The gifts that follow are secondary and fall in line with

the supernatural gifts already detailed. "Helps" antilepseis is a

common word in the papyri, but only used here in the New Testament. It probably referred to the work of the deacons,

assisting the poor and the sick. "Governments" (kuberneseis),

speak of ruling or leading, and Paul doubtless has in mind the

overseers (bishops), the outstanding leaders of the local assembly.

The questions asked by the Apostle (1 Cor. 12:29,30) refer back

to verse fourteen and its argument that the human body is not one

member, but many and all essential. In each question the

Greek demands the answer "no". It is significant that "tongues"

comes at the bottom of the list and the answer "no" deals a death

blow to the modern Pentecostal argument that tongue speaking is a

sign of the in-filling or special baptism of the Holy Spirit for those

who are seeking it. "Eagerly desire the greater gifts" said the

the

Apostle (verse 31) and there is no doubt that Paul unhesitatingly ranks some spiritual gifts above others, but tongue speaking is certainly not one, as this context and chapter fourteen clearly reveal. The Apostle goes on to say there is something better, "I show you a supremely excellent way", a way par excellence which exceeds all that has been given before. It is the way of divine love, and those who have the mind of the Spirit will always put the emphasis on this first and foremost. What this involves is made clear in the poetic hymn to love which follows in chapter thirteen.

***Editor's note:** [] [] [] [] Stuart Allen's book can be found on internet, freely to be read in its entirety – and is quite an extensive work of writing, over more than 300 pages). [] [] It was re-printed in 1977, - [] [] from which this excerpt has been taken.*