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## 1 Corinthians 12 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

## 1 Corinthians 12 Paraphrased

### Introduction

† Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers because they were confused about spiritual gifts and how they functioned in the early church.

† These gifts operated during the apostolic age as signs confirming the gospel message as it spread through the Roman world (Hebrews 2:3-4).

† From the fulfilled perspective, these gifts were part of the church's foundation period before the covenant age transition

was completed in AD 70.

### **1 Corinthians 12:1**

Brothers and sisters, concerning spiritual gifts, I don't want you to remain uninformed.

† Paul begins by correcting misunderstandings about spiritual gifts that were active among believers at that time (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

† The early church was still receiving revelation and guidance while the gospel was spreading.

† Irenaeus wrote that the Spirit worked powerfully in the early church to confirm the truth of Christ.

### **1 Corinthians 12:2**

You know that when you were pagans you were led away to silent idols, however you were influenced.

† Paul reminds them of their former pagan life before they knew the living God (Psalm 115:4-7).

† Idols had no voice or power, unlike the living God who spoke through His Spirit.

† Justin Martyr explained that the power of God among believers revealed the difference between the gospel and pagan religion.

### **1 Corinthians 12:3**

So I want you to understand that no one speaking by God's Spirit says Jesus is cursed, and no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

† The confession that Jesus is Lord was the defining declaration of Christian faith (Romans 10:9).

† The Spirit confirmed the truth about Christ through teaching and miraculous signs.

† Clement of Alexandria wrote that the Spirit guided believers to recognize Christ as Lord.

## **1 Corinthians 12:4**

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit gives them.

† Spiritual gifts varied, but their source was always the same Spirit of God.

† These gifts equipped believers to serve the church during the apostolic era (Ephesians 4:11-12).

† Tertullian recorded that the Spirit worked through believers in many ways during the early church.

## **1 Corinthians 12:5**

There are different kinds of ministries, but the same Lord directs them.

† Service roles in the church differed, but Christ remained the authority over them all.

† Apostles, teachers, and other servants worked together for the growth of the church.

† Eusebius documented the various ministries that developed as the church expanded.

## **1 Corinthians 12:6**

There are different workings, but the same God works all things in everyone.

† God was the one energizing every ministry and gift.

† The diversity of gifts reflected the many ways God worked among believers.

† Early Christian writers emphasized God's active role in guiding the church.

## **1 Corinthians 12:7**

But to each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

† Gifts were not given for personal honor but for the benefit of the church community.

† Each believer who received a gift used it to strengthen the

body.

† Irenaeus wrote that the Spirit distributed gifts for the church's growth.

### **1 Corinthians 12:8**

To one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another a message of knowledge by the same Spirit.

† Wisdom and knowledge referred to supernatural insight given during the church's early years.

† These gifts helped guide believers before the completion of the New Testament writings.

† Clement of Alexandria described the Spirit giving insight and understanding to early Christians.

### **1 Corinthians 12:9**

To another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit.

† Some believers received extraordinary faith that empowered miracles.

† Healings served as signs confirming the authority of the gospel (Acts 5:15-16).

† Justin Martyr testified that miraculous healings occurred among early believers.

### **1 Corinthians 12:10**

To another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish spirits, to another different kinds of languages, and to another the interpretation of languages.

† These gifts were signs confirming the message of Christ.

† Tongues served as a prophetic sign connected to Israel's coming judgment (Isaiah 28:11; 1 Corinthians 14:21).

† Eusebius recorded prophetic activity and miracles in the earliest Christian communities.

## **1 Corinthians 12:11**

But the same Spirit works all these things, distributing them to each person individually just as He decides.

† The Spirit determined who received which gift.

† Gifts were assigned according to God's purpose for the church.

† Irenaeus emphasized that this distribution demonstrated God's sovereignty.

## **1 Corinthians 12:12**

Just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of the body are many but form one body, so also is Christ.

† Paul compares the church to a human body made of many parts.

† Each believer contributes to the unity of the body.

† Early Christian teachers used this illustration frequently when explaining church unity.

## **1 Corinthians 12:13**

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

† The Spirit united people from every background into one covenant body (Ephesians 2:14-16).

† The gospel broke down divisions between Jew and Gentile.

† Clement of Alexandria wrote about the unity created through Christ.

## **1 Corinthians 12:14**

For the body is not one part, but many.

† The church consists of many individuals working together.

† Diversity within the body is part of God's design.

† Early Christian writings stress cooperation among believers.

## **1 Corinthians 12:15**

If the foot says, because I am not a hand I am not part of the body, that does not make it any less a part of the body.

† No believer should feel insignificant.

† Every member of the body has value.

† Irenaeus often used this analogy to explain the importance of every believer.

### **1 Corinthians 12:16**

If the ear says, because I am not an eye I am not part of the body, that does not make it any less part of the body.

† Different functions do not reduce importance.

† Each part of the body serves a purpose.

† The church depends on cooperation among its members.

### **1 Corinthians 12:17**

If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

† Diversity of function is necessary for the body to work.

† A single type of member could not accomplish everything.

† Early teachers used this example to emphasize unity in diversity.

### **1 Corinthians 12:18**

But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body just as He wanted.

† God determines each believer's place within the body.

† This arrangement reflects God's wisdom and order.

† Tertullian noted that the structure of the church reflected divine design.

### **1 Corinthians 12:19**

If they were all one part, where would the body be?

† A body made of only one part could not function.

† Variety within the church allows it to grow and function properly.

† Early Christians encouraged believers to appreciate each other's roles.

### **1 Corinthians 12:20**

But now there are many parts, yet one body.

† Unity exists alongside diversity.

† The church is one body despite having many members.

† Irenaeus emphasized this unity among believers across different regions.

### **1 Corinthians 12:21**

The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

† No believer can claim independence from the rest of the body.

† Pride creates division within the church.

† Early Christian writers warned against arrogance among believers.

### **1 Corinthians 12:22**

On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem weaker are necessary.

† Members who appear less visible often play essential roles.

† God values every part of the body.

† The early church honored humble service.

### **1 Corinthians 12:23**

The parts of the body we think less honorable we treat with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater modesty.

† Paul uses the human body to illustrate how believers protect and value one another.

† Those considered less important often receive greater care.

† Clement of Alexandria wrote about honoring every believer equally.

### **1 Corinthians 12:24**

While our more presentable parts need no such treatment. But God has composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it.

† God balances the body so that no member is neglected.

† This design encourages mutual care and humility.

† Early Christian teaching emphasized caring for weaker members.

### **1 Corinthians 12:25**

So that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

† Unity is the goal of this structure.

† Believers should care for each other equally.

† Irenaeus wrote about the unity shared by Christians throughout the world.

### **1 Corinthians 12:26**

If one member suffers, all suffer with it, if one member is honored, all rejoice with it.

† The church shares both suffering and joy together.

† Mutual concern strengthens the community of believers.

† Early Christians were known for their compassion toward one another.

### **1 Corinthians 12:27**

Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.

† Every believer belongs to Christ's body.

† This identity shapes the church's unity and mission.

† Early Christian writers frequently used the phrase body of Christ when describing the church.

### **1 Corinthians 12:28**

God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, and various kinds of languages.

† These roles were part of the foundation of the early church (Ephesians 2:20).

† Apostles and prophets played key roles in establishing the gospel message.

† Eusebius documented the work of the apostles as they spread Christianity.

### **1 Corinthians 12:29**

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

† Paul shows that not everyone held the same role.

† Diversity of gifts prevented uniformity within the church.

† Early church leaders recognized different callings among believers.

### **1 Corinthians 12:30**

Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak languages? Do all interpret?

† The implied answer is no.

† Gifts were distributed individually by the Spirit.

† This confirms that miraculous gifts were not universal among believers.

### **1 Corinthians 12:31**

But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And yet I show you a still more excellent way.

† Paul transitions to the teaching on love in the next chapter.

† Love gives meaning and purpose to every spiritual gift.

† Early Christian writers emphasized love as the defining mark of true believers.

### **Historical References**

† Justin Martyr wrote about miracles and healings occurring among early Christians.

† Irenaeus described spiritual gifts functioning during the early

church period.

† Clement of Alexandria explained the Spirit's role in guiding believers.

† Eusebius recorded the spread of the gospel through apostolic ministry.

† Tertullian wrote about the activity of spiritual gifts in the early church.

### **How it applies to us today**

† The miraculous gifts served their purpose in establishing the church during the apostolic era.

† Believers today remain part of the same unified body under Christ.

† Every Christian still has a role in serving others and strengthening the church.

† Love continues to be the foundation of Christian life and unity.

† The fulfilled perspective recognizes that the church's foundation has already been established.

### **Q & A Appendix**

**Q** Why were spiritual gifts given in the early church?

**A** They confirmed the message of the gospel and the authority of the apostles (Hebrews 2:3-4).

**Q** Were these gifts given to every believer?

**A** No, the Spirit distributed them individually according to His will (1 Corinthians 12:11).

**Q** Why did miracles occur during the apostolic age?

**A** They confirmed the gospel as it spread throughout the world (Mark 16:20).

**Q** What lesson does the body illustration teach?

**A** Every believer has value and a role within the church (Romans 12:4-5).

**Q** What is the more excellent way Paul mentions?

**A** Love, which he explains fully in the next chapter (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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### **Source Index**

† 1 Corinthians 12

† Justin Martyr, First Apology

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

† Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

† Tertullian, On the Soul

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