

An Overview of Chapters 12, 13, and 14

Chapters 12 - 14 Present a Shift in Subject, but not a Shift in Tone

- Contextually Paul has been reproofing the Corinthians for all kinds of matters of misconduct
 - We are learning as “our older brother is getting yelled at” how to be gospel shaped in all matters of Christian life and behavior
- In this section, there is a topical shift to the theme of spiritual gifts or “spiritual matters”
 - But this is still all reproof tonally

12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.
Spiritual gifts(*pneumatikos*): spiritual, non-physical, related to the spirit

Three Common Pitfalls with Spiritual Matters

1. Covetousness and Discontentment
 - a. Wanting or expecting to have gifts and grace that God has *not* given to you
2. Selfishness and Laziness
 - a. Not using the gifts and grace that God *has* given to you
3. Foolishness and Recklessness
 - a. Using these gifts and grace in a *disorderly*, *disruptive*, and *destructive* way

We Today Could Make an Error with this by Overemphasis or Underemphasis

- The Corinthians had no lack of zeal
 - But they certainly lacked discernment and discretion
- Paul never chastises them for their zeal
 - But it was clear they were out of bounds in application
- There is a common error to overemphasize these spiritual matters
 - But there is also a common retreat to underemphasize them

Starts with - “I Do Not Want You to Be Uninformed”

- This is another effective use of the figure Litotes (see **1st Corinthians 10:1**)
 - Paul wants them to be very informed so that these spiritual misdeeds stop

1st Corinthians 11:17b ...I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.

Ends With - “The Things I Am Writing to You Are a Command of The Lord.”

- This is a firm reminder of the source and authority of these commands

1st Corinthians 14:37 If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.



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A High-Level Summary of each Chapter

Chapter 12

- Begins with Paul emphasizing that all share in the same
 - BUT, there are intentional and diverse gifts and grace given to individuals

This is so with the evidences or manifestations of the spirit:

12:11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

This is also so with the various functions and services in the body:

12:18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

This idea is similar language to what we recently saw in Hebrews:

Hebrews 2:3 - 4

3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,

4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

We can trust that God's arrangement and empowering is best

12:28 - 31

28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

- All of these rhetorical questions are to be answered “no” in light of the context of the assembled local church
 - God has not appointed all as all and does not direct all to be done at the same time.

Chapter 13

12:31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

- Clearly, there are no “higher gifts”
 - But now he's going to show them a “more excellent way” to think about spiritual matters (and truly all matters) – **love**

13:13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Chapter 14

14:1 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may **prophecy**.

Remember, Biblically “prophecy” can have many meanings:

- It can be revealing *doctrine*
- It can be revealing specific *direction*
- Also, in this context, Paul will use “prophecy” to refer to both:
 - Words of prophecy as given for “upbuilding and encouragement and consolation”
 - And interpretation of tongues for “upbuilding and encouragement and consolation”

Good Question to ask Throughout: What is *Prescriptive*, and what is *Descriptive*?

