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A1245 – November 4, 2012 – 1 Corinthians 12:11-26
Unity, Diversity, & Mutuality

Okay, in 1 Cor 12:1-3, concerning those who spoke in tongues and thought they were spiritual because of it. There were a group of Corinthian believers who had brought over ecstatic utterances from their prior pagan religion and claiming it was tongues of the Holy Spirit. Yet Paul in the first three verses gives a sign to identify whether the tongues were sourced in the Spirit of God or not. Basically the test is whether the person who spoke in tongues was swept away into a raptured state. If one was swept away he could not control what was said and this indicated a heathen practice. However, if one could control what was said then it was the Spirit of God. So the first lesson in 1 Cor 12 is to be aware of the fact that tongues speaking is a widespread phenomena found in virtually every cult of the world and therefore can be valid or invalid. Tongues must be tested.

Then in 1 Cor 12:4-11, concerning the great diversity of gifts, ministries and effects among us as sourced in the diversity of God Himself. The Corinthians thought that the one gift of tongues was evidence of the highest form of spirituality. Paul says there are a diversity of gifts, a diversity of ministries and a diversity of effects and therefore speaking in a tongue is just one gift among many, many ways God works. Furthermore, in verse 7, tongues are not given for self-edification but for the common good. Far too often, both then and now, people claim that speaking in a tongue in private prayer is a valid use of the gift. However, the gifts were not given for self-edification but for the building up of others. Finally, in verses 8-11 we have listed for us some of the great diversity of spiritual gifts and we went through them in detail; some are foundational gifts, others are sign gifts, none of them are building gifts. Since all foundational and sign gifts have ceased you need to look to Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 to see the gifts you might have.

Now we come to verse 11 and this is the summary verse. **But one and the same Spirit works all these things**, literally says “effects all these things,” the same word used of God in verse 6 where it says “there are a variety of effects, but the same God works all things in all people.” So then the Spirit is God since they are both given full credit for the effects of the gifts. Then Paul says of the Spirit that he **distributed to each one individually just as He wills**. Observe first of all that you are individually gifted, the gift you were given and the amount of that gift were given. Secondly, you were given your spiritual gift or gifts at the moment you trusted Christ and were born spiritually. And third, the spiritual gift or gifts you possess have been sovereignly given to you independent of human choice. **Just as He wills** not as you will. No human has any say in the spiritual gift or gifts he or she receives; the reason being that the Holy Spirit is omniscient and therefore knows what gift or gifts He wants to give at any given time in history in order to accomplish His purposes. So I suggest the gifts are being strategically given and that is why, for example, I said the foundational and sign gifts are no longer being given. The foundation of the church has already been laid and the sign gifts are no longer necessary since they related to Israel’s kingdom offer and the writing of the NT canon. Now that we are in the building phase the Holy Spirit is sovereignly distributing the building gifts.

Verse 12, **For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ**. Alright we are introduced to the body and Paul has in view the human body. The human body is amazingly diverse and complex. It is just one body and yet all the parts are mutually related. It is an organism, not an organization. It lives, it breathes, it thinks, it walks, it talks, it carries out billions and billions of processes every single second whether it is awake or asleep. And this highly designed, highly complex organism is the illustration of what the church is. It too is a body, one body and yet composed of many, many parts that are all mutually related to one another. It is not an organization either, it is an organism, a living, breathing, thinking, walking, talking organism. That is what we are. And I submit to you that the human body was designed by God to portray the body of Christ, the church. And therefore the human body is revelatory of the church; no one can ever escape it, every human body, whether that of a believer or an unbeliever is a

revelation of Christ's church in that it is a unity composed of a diversity of parts that all work together.

Now from this we understand the nature of the Church - who and what we are by nature as members of the Church. And since we are an organism and not an organization then this is the starting point for a philosophy of ministry. What the local church ought to look like; questions like age segregation vs. age integration, questions like the formal assembly and what that ought to look like and we'll be focusing on these very important questions in following weeks because the church has strayed from a biblical view of the church. And therefore I am submitting to you that all philosophies of ministry are not equal. All ministry models are not equal. At the very root of your philosophy of ministry ought to be the concept that the church is an organism, a living, breathing organism, it is one in unity, but it is diverse in that it has many parts and these parts are not independent but mutually supportive of one another. And in a few weeks I will be putting these things together into a ministry model and comparing them with ministry models that prevail in the church today such that everyone expects certain things when they enter a local church and yet if we start with just the Bible, what should we expect. And I submit to you that what you should expect and what is there are not very close at all and what you find in almost all churches today reflects an unbiblical and even anti-biblical philosophy.

Now, how did this organism that we are come about? What is it that makes the church unlike any organization in the world? Answer: verse 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.** No organization is formed in this way, search the world over and you will not find this as the requirement for entering into an organization. And yet it is the way you enter the organism called the body of Christ which is the church. So why has the church mirrored the world? I can only say that they are listening more to the world than they are to the word. And if we would simply pay attention to the word and not the world we would be very different from the world. Now there are several things here unique to the church. First, the baptism of the Spirit. Now this was actually promised to the nation Israel in Matt 3:11 but they rejected their king so an application of it is being made to Jew and Gentile during the present age starting on the Day of Pentecost and you can trace this in Acts 2 to Jews, Acts 8 to

Samaritans, Acts 10 to Gentiles and disciples of John the Baptist in Acts 19. The point of those four passages is that all four groups were baptized into the same organism, the body of Christ. And any time a person believes, no matter what their background, they are baptized in this same body of Christ, the Church. It's the invisible church, the body composed of all believers from the Day of Pentecost up until this moment. The verb **were** is aorist passive meaning it is a once for all occurrence, namely when we believed, and the passive means that you were **baptized** by someone else, in this case the Spirit.

Let's look at the various baptisms in the Bible because actually there are eight baptisms in the Bible, here's a chart that shows them.

Real (dry) Baptisms	Ritual (wet) Baptisms
Noah's (judgment/salvation from the antediluvian world into the postdiluvian world)	John's (picture of judgment/salvation from the present world into the future Millennial Kingdom)
Moses' (judgment/salvation from Egypt into the age of Israel)	Jesus' (picture of judgment/salvation role of the Messiah)
Christ's Cross (judgment/salvation work of the Messiah)	Christian (picture of judgment/salvation)
Fire (judgment)	
Spirit (salvation)	

On the right side you have three Ritual Baptisms and they are all wet. If you look at these three who administers them? Who does the baptizing in every case here? Man does. God doesn't administer these, men administer these and that is why they are called ritual baptisms, nothing really happens other than the person gets wet because men can't do anything. Each of these is a picture of something God does, but a picture and the reality are different. Then we have on the left side five Real Baptisms and they are all dry, so no one gets wet. If you look at these five who is it who administers them? Who does the baptizing in every case here? God does. Men don't administer these, God administers these and that is why they are real baptisms, something really happens because God is the one administering them, and notice, the

ones baptized don't get wet, they stay dry. Alright, which one is in 1 Cor 12:13? Spirit baptism. Who administers it? God or man? God. God the Spirit to be precise. Is it a real baptism or a ritual? Real.

So what is baptism? The central idea of baptism is "identification." It was commonly used of "dipping" or "immersing" a cloth in dye to change the color. This dipping so identified the cloth with the new color that it could be said to be "purple" or "red," whatever color it was dipped into. In the same way, when you were baptized by the Spirit you were so identified with the body of Christ that your essential identity has been changed. You were in Adam, thoroughly identified with him, but now you are in Christ, thoroughly identified with Him. How fantastic is this? The Holy Spirit changed your identification, your essential identity. And it matters not whether you are Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, old or young; if you have trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation you have been identified with Him and nothing can ever change that identification.

Now, the thing that expresses that reality is the ritual of Christian baptism, what we do down at the river is a picture of the change in identity that occurred at the exact moment you trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation. Now you are in the body.

As a quick aside there is only one baptism of the Spirit, Eph 4. I mention this because some Christians, particularly in charismatic circles, insist that there are two baptisms of the Spirit; one for all believers, that one they don't deny, but a second baptism for power and this one they say is accompanied by speaking in tongues that evidences that you have the second baptism. You may hear them say something like, you may have been baptized *by* the Spirit but have you been baptized *in* the Spirit. The problem with that distinction is that in the Greek text it's all the same preposition, there aren't different prepositions controlling the baptisms, it's always the same preposition and Eph 4 says there is but one baptism, not two. So there is only one baptism and all believers have it.

The second thing to point out is that Paul says **whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free** and I take it that means there are no racial distinctions in the church and no social distinctions in the church. I'd add that if Paul were here he'd say no distinctions between us whatsoever, we are

all in the same body. He could just as well have said whether male or female, whether old or young. It makes no difference; we were all baptized into Christ's body. So we're all a part of the same thing and therefore it's wrong to malign in the church on the basis of race, social status, gender or age. The Bible cuts through all the things people naturally divide over. It's therefore sinful in the church to divide over skin color. And yet many Christians would have a heart attack if we had ethnic diversity. They just think that couldn't work, which shows you they don't understand the first thing about who they are as the church, the blood purchase of God. The church is not red, yellow, black or white, it is red, yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight and all are represented in heaven so you might as well get used to it now. It's also sinful to divide over age, yet many local churches are visibly age-segregated, the split is typically between old and young. So they have a traditional service for the old and a contemporary service for the young. And people say this is good, something for everybody. Don't forget, the Bible also says they will call evil, good and that is the case here. It is not good, it is inconsistent with who we are as an organism where all the parts are mutually related and it is contrary to this verse, it is the opposite of unity, it is divisive and divides the young from the wisdom of the old, it divides the orthodox theology of the past from the unorthodox theology of the present, it cuts against everything that the body of Christ is! And I would say any pastor that allows that division in his assembly is completely out of it biblically. So the second thing is the unity of all believers.

The third thing is the unity of the indwelling Spirit. Paul says, **and we were all made to drink of one Spirit**. Grammatically this is also an aorist passive like the phrase we were baptized. This means that it occurred in the past at a point in time, namely, when we believed, and passive means it occurred to you, you were made to drink, you didn't have a choice to drink or not drink - you were made to drink. Now this drinking of the Spirit is distinct from baptism of the Spirit. Baptism places us in Christ, changing our essential identity. Drinking of the Spirit is the Spirit coming to live within us, indwelling us. The imagery of indwelling comes from the OT temple. That temple was a physical building that was indwelt by the Shechinah Glory. In the NT the spiritual temple is us and we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He has taken up residence within us. Now when I say that don't think I'm denying omnipresence. For Him to take up residence in a specific locale does not mean His divine attribute goes away. Well, what is it affirming then? It's

affirming that there's a location designated as the meeting place between God and man. In the OT God met man at the physical temple. In the NT God meets man at the spiritual temple, which is us. Each one of us is a temple and all of us corporate are a temple. So the meeting place of God and man in this era is you individually and the church corporately. That is where God has chosen to take up residence during this present age. So wherever you go you take the Holy Spirit with you. And He permanently indwells you. He'll never leave you. You can grieve Him by sin but He'll never depart from you. So the third thing is the unity of the indwelling Spirit. We all were made to drink of one Spirit. He took up residence with us and now God meets with man through you.

Finally, the fourth great idea is the theological induction that the Church is distinct from Israel. We gather this because Israel never had a baptism by the Spirit into Christ's body and Israel never had permanent indwelling of the Spirit. Israel had her covenants and was defined by her covenants. The idea that the Church is Israel is an idea that stems from the theological claim that there is only one people of God. While the Scriptures do teach there is only one way of salvation that is not the same as saying there is only one people of God. And the distinctions between Israel and the Church must be maintained. So verse 13 is emphasizing unity; there is a unity established by baptism of the Spirit. There is a unity of all races, all social status, all genders, all ages in one body, and there is a unity of indwelling.

Verse 14 and here the emphasis is diversity. Within this unity there is diversity, just like a body. **For the body is not one member, but many.** The Greek word for **member** means "limb," and refers to an arm, a leg, some part of the human body. And the human body is clearly not just one limb, one arm, one leg, one ear; it is a combination of many members that make up the one. And all these members are crucial to making up the one body. There is unity and diversity just like there is in God! Now verse 15, **If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any less a part of the body.** 16 **And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.** Now the first thing I would say about this is that you may not think you are a necessary part of the body. You may think I am necessary but you are not necessary. What you think is irrelevant. God says you are important. You are an important part of the

body because He made you a part of the body. Therefore you should not say you are unimportant. You are important. You are a part of the body and a crucial one. All of the parts of the body are crucial and I think you will find this to be true if you take one away. There are no parts of the body you can just take away without repercussions. Even such organs as the appendix and the tonsils play critical roles in the immune system and you could suffer for not having them at critical times in development. The way I have always stated this as a biologist is to say, there are no vestigial organs. Evolutionists at one time listed more than 200 parts of your body that were nothing more than vestiges of past evolution and no longer necessary parts of the body. Since that time functions for all 200+ have been discovered. There are no vestigial organs. And there are no vestigial Christians. You are important because God made you a part of the body and has a function for you.

At the same time this does not mean that every part of the body is as important as every other part, take away your heart and you will die, but take away your appendix and you will live. There are different degrees of importance to our body parts and as you can see from verse 28 Paul recognizes this. But Paul's point at this time is that they all are part of the body and therefore have a function to perform. Whether you think you are a necessary part or not is irrelevant - you are, God says you are.

Verse 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?** See, we are not all the same thing and if we were all the same thing, how limited a body this would be, how ridiculous to just be an eye, then you cannot get around to see things but must wait until things pass you by. And you could not hear things just around you. Or if you could hear but you could not see or smell what kind of a body is that? It's no body. Paul's point is we are not all the same thing, you may be an eye and I may be a kneecap and they may be a foot, but in the end all are necessary to have a **whole body**.

Verse 18, **But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.** That is, you are placed where you are by God because that's where He wanted you to serve. So find out what part you are so that you can serve! You would like to know what part you are, I know, that way you can know how to function and to receive the most joy and to be a benefit to others. You do this by putting the Lord first, seeking Him in the

study of His word, by prayer and petition, presenting your request to God. If you do these things you will discover your gift, where He has placed you in the body and you will know how to serve. How sad it is that so few Christians discover their gift or gifts! But this is not due to God not wanting them to know, of God hiding it, but of them not wanting Him, and by the cares of the world are swept away.

Verse 19, **If they were all one member, where would the body be?**

20 But now there are many members but one body. There is unity and diversity in the body. Every part is necessary, some more so than others, yes, but all are necessary and have a role to play. If each member knew their place and their role to play then the body of Christ would work in harmony. This is why it is so important to know and use your gift. It may not be easy, I didn't say it would be easy, it may be hard, but it will bring great joy, it will benefit others, it will build up the body of Christ. And what are you here for if not to build up the body of Christ? That is why Christ bought you and paid for you, to serve others in the building up of the body of Christ. So then if there are some members that are not like you, that's a good thing, don't shun those who are different from you, the tongue is not like the foot, the eye is not like the hand. They are different but they are all part of the same body and so do not think that because you are a hand everyone ought to be a hand like you. No, there are many differences in the body of Christ, but they all go together in one body.

Verse 21 and now Paul moves to mutuality - the fact that every part of the body needs every other part of the body, that they work together as a unit and require one another. Verse 21, **And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."** Yet this is how many believers think, they think every other believer ought to be like them and if they are not like them they don't need them. Baloney! The body of Christ is not a cookie cutter of you. Get over yourself. The church at Corinth thought everyone should be a tongues speaker. Tongues are fine but not everyone should speak in tongues. Surely you should have those who prophecy and teach and serve and give as well. And Paul even says that when it comes to the exercise of the gifts in your assembly, you should desire the greater gifts to operate more frequently. Gifts like tongues are lesser gifts; necessary, yes, but not the equal of teacher. I should much rather have the gift of teacher exercised among you than

tongues. And the apostle Paul agrees with me in verse 31. Every part needs every other part. How well would your heart muscle work without your nerves to tell it when to beat? How well would your feet work without proper nerve endings? How well would your arms work without proper bone structure. Every part is needed; you can't say you don't need some part. So it is in the body of Christ, every gift is needed in its proper time for its proper function.

Verse 22, **On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;** and yet how long do we have to preach these things before you start to act and live this way. I'm not talking about theory here, I'm talking about application, I'm talking about genuine community, I'm talking about recognizing that everyone is necessary, no matter how tiny they may be gifted. Some say the coccyx is an unnecessary vestige of a tail we once had and that it was no longer needed. Yet upon further study it was discovered that six muscles were attached to the coccyx and I dare say you need all six of those muscles; the coccyx is seemingly unnecessary but very necessary indeed. All of us are necessary because we all make up a part of the body? So then what is your gift? And how are you exercising your gift? What are you doing to build up the body of Christ no matter how seemingly small? You may think you are worthless but you are necessary. Even the littlest bit counts. Don't think you are unnecessary or you can't contribute anything. Nonsense. The Church *is not* the pastor, the Church *is not* the teacher, the Church *is* the pastor, the teacher, the servant, the merciful, the generous, the helper, the administrator, the exhorter all together in one. All are necessary for proper function. And yet some of you are hardly ever here. Some of you I know live very far away and cannot be here and that I understand. But others just aren't here. Why aren't you here? If you aren't here how can you benefit us when you are not here? Well I'm sure you have more important things to do than build up the only thing Jesus Christ ever came to build. Right? You're building your kingdom, your prestige, your something or other. What about the Church Jesus Christ purchased with His own blood? What are you doing to build that up? Oh, I come and listen to what the pastor says. That's great and all but at the judgment seat of Christ Jesus I'm not going to be there to say anything for you, it's just going to be you and Jesus Christ, mono y mono. And He's going to say I gave you a gift and what did you do with it to build up My church? Oh, uh, I never found out what that was. Not a very good answer.

So I'm just warning you in advance so you can make a change now so you can have something to say later. Because this isn't charades, He bought you; He paid the price for you, He gifted you and you do what? Wander around aimlessly. You may not think much of your gift but Christ does. You are necessary.

Verse 23, **and those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable,** ²⁴**whereas our more presentable members have no need of it.** In other words, there are parts of your physical body that you consider flawed, you don't like your nose, you don't like your ears, you don't like your waist, so what do you do? You try to wear your hair a certain way or your clothes a certain way to cover up the flaws and by doing that you are trying to make them less noticeable and more presentable. Whereas your good features, those don't need any help, so God does the same thing to the body of Christ. Middle of verse 24, **But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked,** we may not see that God gives more abundant honor to those who are gifted in seemingly less significant ways, but He does, if not now then at the judgment seat of Christ hereafter. The purpose of which is verse 25, **so that there may be no division in the body,** how does his giving more abundant honor to those that lack prohibit division? It doesn't always, but knowing the purpose we should adjust our thinking and change our life so that it does! **but *that the members may have the same care for one another.*** The reason God bestows greater honor on one and lesser on another is so that we would mutually care for one another. We ought to be anxious to care for one another. Always loving, always caring, always serving.²⁶**And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it;** at least we should, if someone is hurting and suffering, we should all hurt and suffer with them. Plato said, we do not say, my finger has a pain, we say, I have a pain. So it is with the body of Christ. If one hurts we all hurt together. No one is a loner, everyone is part of the body. On the other hand, **if *one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*** If one celebrates we all celebrate. We are an organism, we are mutually tied in to one another. If one cries we all cry, we are an organism. If one gives thanks we all give thanks. Obviously this all requires interaction and closeness and vulnerability. If one of our organs suffers other organs suffer. And if one organ is doing well then it enhances the abilities of the others.

We will leave the rest for next week, but in conclusion, the body is a unity with diversity that works with mutuality; the unity is due to the fact that there is but one Spirit who baptized us into the one body, identifying us with Christ and all are indwelled by the same Spirit of God, He resides in us. And yet there are many parts of the body, there are a variety of members and no member is without a function. Finally, there is a mutuality of each of the members, each member is necessary. You may not feel like you play a very important role in the body but you're role is absolutely necessary. There are no vestigial Christians. The Spirit gifted you exactly as He decided. And we need only find our gift and operate in it. At the same time we ought never to think others are unimportant, especially those who are not as presentable as us. God is going to honor them in great ways whether we do or not. Therefore we ought to care for one another and if one suffers we all suffer, if one celebrates we all celebrate. We are a body and this is how the body works!

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