

Being Unified in the Body
1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Introduction & Review

Last week I gave an introduction to both the book of 1 Corinthians and then specifically to the subject of being truly spiritual in chapters 12-14. If you were not here last week, please pick up a copy of the sermon notes or get the audio CD. (See: Being Spiritual - 10/12/08). Let me quickly review some of the more important points from that sermon for the benefit of those that were not here and as preparation for this morning's message on the rest of chapter 12.

First, we will begin a series of sermons on spiritual warfare next month, and foundational for understanding that subject is understanding the true nature of being spiritual as well as how that functions within the church, the body of Christ. Soldiers in war rely on one another and the same is true in spiritual warfare. We need one another in order to mature and stand firm against every wind of doctrine (See Ephesians 4:11-16).

Second, Corinth, which is located on the southern part of the isthmus that connects the district of Achaia to the mainland of Greece. It was the seat of Roman power in that province and was one of the richest, most powerful, and most immoral cities of Greece. The Greeks even invented a word meaning "to Corinthianize," which meant "to live an immoral life."

Third, Paul founded a church in Corinth at the end of his second missionary journey and then spent 1 ½ years there teaching and was followed by Apollos, yet the church was still strongly influenced by the immorality of the city and they brought many of their pagan practices into the church. Paul's letter to them is a strong rebuke and correction of their many errors which included their divisions and factions caused by their pride, their immaturity, their toleration of gross sin in their midst, their taking one another before the civil courts, their continued involvement with the cult prostitutes, their confusion about marriage and singleness, their abuse of their liberty and causing other believers to stumble into sin, their following of social styles and customs rather than God's order, their severe abuse of the Lord's Supper, their confusion about true spirituality, and their questioning of Jesus' resurrection. The church at Corinth was a catastrophe and not a model to follow.

Fourth, remember that chapters and verse divisions are not part of the original text of the Bible but were added so that it would be easier to reference particular sections of it. 1 Corinthians 12-14 is all one section of Paul's letter dealing with one overall subject which he introduces in 1 Cor. 12:1-3. While your Bible probably translates verse 1 similar to the NAS, "Now concerning spiritual [gifts], brethren, I do not want you to be unaware" with the word "gifts" being in italic showing this word is not in the original Greek, a better translation is Young's Literal Translation which says, "And concerning the spiritual things, brethren, I do not wish you to be ignorant." The issue in these chapters is not spiritual gifts (which would be χάρισμα / charisma and occurs in verse 4), but the πνευματικός / pneumatikos, spiritual things, or being spiritual. The Corinthians were not ignorant concerning spiritual gifts themselves for back in 1:7 he had already told them that they "were not lacking in any gift." Their ignorance was in the purpose of those gifts and how to use them in a proper spiritual manner.

Paul then demonstrated their ignorance of true spirituality by bringing up their former pagan practices in verse 2 saying, "You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led."

These pagan practices sought to reach the state of ecstasy which is described as a semiconscious euphoric feeling of oneness with the god or goddess. This was viewed as a supernatural, sensuous

communion with a deity, and those who reached it were held in high esteem as having achieved the ultimate in their religion. Among their practices were vigils, fastings, the contemplation of sacred objects, chanting, drunkenness, physical exertion in whirling dancing, frenzied hypnotic chants and sexual orgies. This state could then produce divination, revelatory dreams and vision, and Plato & Virgil both record scenes of people shaking and falling to the ground babbling in ecstatic speech. A person experiencing these things was considered to be adept in the mystery religion and had reached the pinnacle of its experience.

Paul continues in verse 3 to show how they were bringing their pagan practices into the church as a false spirituality. *“Therefore I make known to you, that on one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus is accursed’; and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Spirit.”* Apparently there were those who were supposedly under the control of the Holy Spirit but were in fact blaspheming the name of Christ. Someone under the control of the Spirit of God would never allow such a thing. Those who were blaspheming were under the control of a different spirit. True spirituality cannot be assumed because someone appears to be in a spiritual state or doing something considered spiritual. True spirituality must be judged by whether the person is bringing glory to Christ or not.

Fifth, Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 the origin and purpose of the gifts, ministries and abilities to serve the Lord. Every spiritual gift, every ministry in which that gift is used and whatever power is given to use that gift in that ministry are all given by God to each one individually as God wills as a manifestation of His Spirit, and their purpose is the common good of the whole body (1 Corinthians 12:7,11). Those that claim only one particular gift, that of tongues, is the sign of the Baptism of the Spirit are simply wrong. Any gift is a manifestation of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit, (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self-control - Galatians 5:22,23), is the evidence of the Spirit's control of a person's life. We will see later today that they also err because no gift is given to all believers and all believers are baptized in the Spirit.

The particular list of gifts Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 is different from those given later in that chapter and in other books. This specific list is being used by Paul to point out to them a truth about true spirituality. They wanted these “showy” gifts that would be outwardly manifested and could easily call attention to themselves to gain prestige. They thought themselves to be spiritual when in reality they were carnal. Paul will contrast their selfish desire with true spirituality and the true purpose of all gifts to build up the rest of the body.

The Body Analogy - 1 Corinthians 12:12

Look now at 1 Corinthians 12:12 *“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.”*

Paul uses the analogy of a body because it is a fitting description of the Church and quite a contrast to how the Corinthians were behaving. The diversity and yet unity of the body is something that is easily recognized. The body has all sorts of parts including arms & legs, hands & feet, a waist, a chest and a head with eyes, ears, nose and mouth, yet all of these parts together make up one entity, a body.

The church is the visible manifestation of Christ in the world. The church is the body of Christ. It is one entity, yet is made of up many different people with different gifts. Just as the head is not attached where the feet are located, so the people who make up the church live in different places. Just as each body part serves a different function, for the eye does not do what the ear does & vice versa, so God gives believers different gifts to fulfill different functions. And just as you can do more with one of your hands than the other, so God gives different ministries and different abilities to the saints that make up the church. Yet with all this diversity, the church is still one entity, the Body of Christ.

Entrance into the Body - 1 Corinthians 12:13

The reason for this unity is seen in 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. Regardless of our genetic, cultural or economic background, all who belong to Jesus became part of this body in the same way. The Spirit baptizes every believer into the body and then indwells from then on.

This is a crucial verse in correcting a major error of those advocating Pentecostal theology. Their two-tiered Christianity of being saved and then later being baptized by the Holy Spirit contradicts this verse and is therefore wrong. Romans 8:9 adds, *“But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”* These two verses make it plain that every true Christian is *“baptized by the Holy Spirit”* or they are not true Christians. In addition, every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (*made to drink*, cf. John 7:37-39 & 1 Corinthians 2:13; Galatians 3:2). I already pointed out from 1 Corinthians 12:11 that any of the spiritual gifts would be a manifestation of the Spirit so their claim that baptism in the Spirit must be evidenced by speaking in an unknown tongue is also wrong. Don't ever let anyone tell you that you are not *“baptized in”* or do not have the Holy Spirit because you do not speak in tongues. That is a false doctrine and those saying it are either quite ignorant of what the Bible actually states or they are a false teacher.

The Diverse Members of the One Body - 1 Cor. 12:14-20

In verse 14-20 Paul restates his thesis and then goes on to illustrate the absurdity of one member of the body thinking they are not part of the body because they are not some other body part. *“For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,’ it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, ‘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. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body...”*

Obviously when we look at our own bodies we realize that every part is needed in order to make up a whole body. Every part is needed in order for the body to function properly. Everyone in the church is needed for the church to function properly and fulfill its God-given purposes. No one in the church should refrain from getting involved because they do not think their particular gifts, ministry or ability are as important as those of someone else.

Paul's statements in verses 16 & 17 are ludicrous in order to emphasize that point. Imagine if the whole body were one big eye. You would make the National Enquirer and other supermarket tabloids and you would be featured on television talk shows, but it would do you no good because you could not hear, walk, talk or eat. The same thing would be true if you were one big ear, or one big nose or any other body part. The very idea of such a thing is absurd in the extreme.

The same is true in the church. God has given different gifts, ministries and abilities to different people so the church would be whole and healthy to fulfill every function God has entrusted to the body. If everyone was a preacher, who would minister to the children. If everyone worked with kids, who would help the sick, if everyone helped the sick, who would repair the facilities, if everyone repaired the facilities, who would be the missionaries, if everyone were on the field as missionaries, who would be here to minister locally. We could go on and on in this vein. Paul's outrageous illustration gives us a clear focus that every part of the body is needed for the body to be whole. Every gift, ministry and ability is needed in the church for it to be whole and functioning properly.

Paul emphasizes in verse 18 that it is God that places every person in the body as He desires. This is a correction of the proud and selfish behavior of the Corinthians. It is the height of arrogance to complain that you do not have the position that you want when it is God that places you in that position. He knows where you fit best regardless of what you think, and that goes both directions in keeping you in a lower position than you think you deserve or in giving you a ministry greater than what you think

you can handle. It is God that equips and puts each person in the body just where He wants them, so there are many members, but only one body.

The Need & Unity of Every Member - 1 Corinthians 12:21-27

Paul goes on in verses 21-27 to stress the need of every member of the body in using their gift. He starts out by rebuking the proud who think only what they do is important. 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.’ On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.”* Paul again uses an absurdity to bring out his point. The eye needs the hand and the head needs the feet. It takes every member of the body for it to function properly. In fact, if a body loses one of its members, say an arm, we recognize that the rest of the body is handicapped. The body will still be alive and can find innovative ways to carry out the functions the arm used to carry out, but it will not be as efficient. And what happens to the arm that is separated from the rest of the body? It shrivels up and dies.

The same is true in the church. Tragically, there are those that would think their particular gifts and ministries are the most important ones and so they look down on those who have different gifts and ministries as if those things were less important or not needed at all. The Corinthians would have considered the “showy” gifts listed back in verses 8-10 in such a manner. They were more prestigious than a gift such as helps or administrations listed in verse 28. The truth is that those things which are often thought of as the most important because they are out front and visible are not as important as what is behind the scenes.

For example, in terms of our physical bodies, we give a lot of attention to things like our face, hair and general appearance. Cosmetic advertisers would make you think that those things determine your self worth. We also give a lot of honor to our hands and their ability to accomplish tasks. But let us be honest about it. Could you get by if your hair color wasn't perfect, you could not find your lipstick and your face looked like a well dried raisin? Of course. Only vanity would make those things a hardship. Could you make it if you were missing one of your faculties such as sight, hearing, smell, taste or the use of your legs or hands? It would be more difficult, but certainly you could still live and succeed. However, if you were to lose one of your body parts that are hidden not thought of as often, your “weaker” or more “feeble” parts, then you would find out very quickly how necessary they are. How long can you make it without a heart, lungs, kidneys or liver. In fact, when was the last time you gave serious contemplation to the care and well being of your liver? Yet the liver, unlike hair, is necessary because you are dead without it.

So it is in the church. The preacher is probably the most visible person in the church and after him the music ministry. But guess what? A church can still function without either even if handicapped from what it could otherwise do. You can also get along without this building or property. But the church cannot continue long without faithful people praying or faithful people telling their friends, neighbors and co-workers about Jesus Christ. There must be faithful people who will call one another to encourage and help one another. There must be faithful people who will disciple younger Christians, and faithful parents must instill into their children virtue and the knowledge of God.

If the preacher, the music ministry, the building and the property were all taken away, the church would be hindered from what it could be, but it would survive and continue to accomplish God's purposes. If these other ministries were taken away that are behind the scenes, the church would become sick and eventually die.

Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 12:23, *“and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, whereas our seemly members have not need of it. But God has so composed the body, given more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.”* Don't get lost in the words

“seemly and unseemly” or “comely and uncomely” in the KJV. The words simply refer to those body parts that would be considered beautiful and displayed as compared to those that would not be thought of as pretty and might be covered so that they are not seen. Paul's point is that we should be careful to honor those members of the body behind the scenes that are rarely considered or displayed. Those with gifts that are more visible and receive attention should not become proud and arrogant and think themselves overly important. Instead, they should give honor and respect to those whose gifts are behind the scenes and receive little attention. Why? Verse 25 says it is so that there will not be any division in the body and proper care is given to every member of the body. Mutual humility and respect promote unity in the body.

Paul explains in verse 26 that we are all in this together, *“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.”* Let's face it, if you stub your toe, smash your finger or have a toothache, the rest of your body is caught up with the suffering of pain coming from that one part. If your legs carry you across the finish line first, the rest of your body is honored along with your fast feet as the winner.

The same is true in the church. We are all knit together. What I do affects you, and what you do affects me. While we are many members we are yet but one body and individually members of one another (Romans 12:4,5). Both our individual sins and individual obedience to the Lord affect the rest of the body causing either suffering or honor. Both Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 use this same analogy to describe our responsibilities toward one another and the necessity of being unified. Each person in the body helps hold the whole body together and the proper working of every person in the body according to their gifts, ministries and abilities causes the growth of the whole body (Ephesians 4:16). We have responsibilities to speak the truth in love to one another, to hold each other accountable and protect one another from false doctrine and the deceitful scheming of our enemies (Ephesians 4:14,15). Romans 12:9-21 includes quite a few responsibilities we have toward one another in the body including being devoted to one another in brotherly love; giving preference to one another in honor; contributing to the needs of the saints; practicing hospitality, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep; being of the same mind toward one another and being lowly of mind instead of haughty.

Diversity in the Body - 1 Corinthians 12:28-30

Paul concludes this portion of his discussion on the body with a second list of spiritual gifts followed by a sequence of rhetorical questions to emphasize his point that the body of Christ is made up of diverse people with diverse gifts and ministries. All of them are needed. There is no room for pride in the body.

“And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not worders of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?”

Paul first emphasizes once again that it is God that appoints each of us to the place He wants us to serve Him. There is no gift that everyone has, and no one has every gift. This is another verse that contradicts Pentacostal doctrine. Since the text specifically states that all do not speak in tongues for the same reason all do not have any of the other gifts listed, why then do they contradict that with an expectation that all would speak in tongues? It cannot be a matter of being baptized in the Spirit or even filled with the Spirit since it is the Spirit that gives each gift as He desires.

Notice as well that there are gifts mentioned here not mentioned earlier in the chapter including teaching, helps, administration and some add apostles too. Both of the lists in 1 Corinthians 12 differ from the one in Romans 12. There are no comprehensive lists of gifts in Scripture. Why? The emphasis in scripture seems to be on serving the Lord and not on identifying the particular gift first. It is my

personal belief that God gives to each of us not just one gift, but a unique set of gifts, ministries and abilities by which we serve Him. I also don't think we can really know what God has given us unless we are ministering and that ministry is confirmed by other mature believers. If we had a comprehensive list we might box ourselves into a particular gift and not find out how God really wants us to serve Him.

The list here is given in a relative order of importance and indicated by the adverbs, "first," "second," and "then." Apostles are first and they are not included in the earlier list for an apostle was uniquely appointed by the Lord as one sent with His authority and equipped with many gifts to perform the signs, wonders and miracles of an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12). I pointed out last week that apparently Paul had most or all of the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. None of the Corinthians had the gift of being an apostle.

It is also interesting to note that the additional gifts of teachers (which is third), and helps and administrations are all listed before the gift of various kinds of tongues which is last in the list. That would have been a rebuke to the Corinthians, but an additional rebuke is that the gift of tongues is last in the list. Remember I mentioned earlier that there is some indication that tongues is one of the prestigious gifts they desired because it so closely resembled the highest levels of spirituality in their former pagan practices.

Conclusions

Paul's argument throughout this section is simple. The gifts, ministries and abilities you have been given to you by God. Every member of the body is important and no member can be prideful. If you are a true Christian then God has equipped you to serve Him in some way. If you are not doing so, then at best you leave this body handicapped and hindered in functioning properly, or at worst, sick with a terminal illness. This has been a correction of their false understanding of what it means to be spiritual. They sought spiritual gifts and used them in pride. Paul points out the origin and purpose of their spiritual gifts and why they must use them with one another in humility.

1 Corinthians 12:31 is Paul's transition to 1 Corinthians 13 in showing that love is a superior mark of being truly spiritual. That is where we will pick up our study next week.

Sermon Notes - 10/19/2008
Being Unified in the Body - 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Introduction & Review

Understanding what it means to be _____ is foundational for preparation for spiritual warfare
Corinth one of the richest, most powerful, and most _____ cities of Greece at that time.
Paul founded a church there at the end of the his 2nd missionary journey and taught there for _____ years
Paul's letter is one of strong rebuke and correction for their _____, immaturity and doctrinal errors
1 Corinthians 12-14 is all one section and is a correction of their false understanding of being _____
They were not ignorant of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 1:7), but of being _____ in the use & purpose of gifts
Their pagan practices sought the experience of _____, a feeling of oneness with the god or goddess
Those in the state of ecstasy were known to shake, fall down and babble in ecstatic _____
Some who were supposedly under the control of the Holy Spirit were instead _____ Christ
Every spiritual gift, ministry and ability are given by _____ as He wills for the common good of the body
_____ gift is a manifestation of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit and is the evidence of His control
The specific list of gifts in 1 Cor. 12:8-10 were the "showy" ones that appealed to their _____.

The Body Analogy - 1 Corinthians 12:12

A physical body is made up of _____ parts, but is only one body.
The Church is _____ entity, yet is made of up many people with different gifts, ministries & abilities

Entrance into the Body - 1 Corinthians 12:13

The Spirit _____ every believer into the body and then indwells from then on.
Pentecostal theology teaches you are saved first, and then baptized by the Holy Spirit at a _____ time are
Pentecostal theology directly _____ 1 Corinthians 12:11, 13, 30 and Roman 8:9

The Diverse Members of the One Body - 1 Corinthians 12:14-20

Every part is needed in order for the physical body to _____ properly.
Every gift, ministry and ability is needed in the church for it to be _____ and functioning properly
God that places every person in the body as _____ - a rebuke to the proud & selfish Corinthians

The Need & Unity of Every Member - 1 Corinthians 12:21-27

If a body loses a part, the body will be _____ and the cut off portion will shrivel and die
Those things which are _____ are often not as important as those things which are not seen
You can live without hair or even an arm or leg, but you cannot live without a heart, lungs, or _____
A church can still function, though hindered, without some of the most _____ gifts / ministries
A church will die without faithful people _____, evangelizing, discipling and caring for one another
"Seemly" (comely) refers to what is beautiful and is _____. Unseemly is what is not so beautiful.

Humility and proper respect given to every part of the body promotes _____

What I do and you do individually will affect the rest of the body causing either _____ or honor

Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 also use the body analogy to describe our _____ to one another

Diversity in the Body - 1 Corinthians 12:28-30

_____ gifts, ministries & abilities are needed. There is no room for _____ in the body.

It is God that _____ each of us to the place He wants us to serve Him

There is no _____ that everyone has, and no one has every _____

The list of particular gifts in verse 28 is _____ the same as in verses 8-10. There is no comprehensive list

This list is given in relative order of _____, and various kinds of tongues is _____.

Every Christian is equipped by _____ to serve Him, to fail to do so leaves the body handicapped at best.

Paul's transition to chapter 13 is to show that there is a superior mark of being truly spiritual - _____

KIDS CORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help. **Young Children** - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Count how many times the word "body" is mentioned. 2) Discuss with your parents what it means to be part of the body of Christ.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others.

Why is an understanding of what it means to be truly spiritual a foundation to being victorious in spiritual warfare? What is the background of Corinth - location, importance and character of its society? What is the history of the founding of the church in Corinth - who planted it and taught there in its early years? What was the purpose of Paul's letter to that church? What were some of the things he had to rebuke and correct? What is the subject of 1 Corinthians 12-14? What is the difference between charisma and pneumatikos? Describe the pagan worship of the Corinthians. How could someone who was supposedly under the control of the Holy Spirit say that "Jesus is accursed"? On what basis are we to discern what is true spirituality and what is false? What is the evidence of the manifestation of the Spirit? How does Pentecostal theology contradict 1 Corinthians 12:11? What is the evidence that the Holy Spirit has control over an individual? Why does Paul list the particular gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and not include those he lists in other passages? Describe the diversity and unity of the physical body? Of the church? How does a person become part of the body of Christ? What is the contradiction between Pentecostal theology and 1 Corinthians 12:13. and regarding the Baptism of the Spirit and speaking in tongues? Why is wrong for someone to conclude based on their gifts that they are either not part of the body, or can constitute the whole of it? Why does every part of the body have need of the other parts - physically and in the church? What do the words "seemly" and "unseemly" (comely and uncomely) refer to? Why would our weaker, unseemly parts be necessary - describe both physically and in the church? What is required in order to give our "unseemly members" "more abundant seemliness?" Why is it that if one of our members suffer the rest of the body suffers and if one of our members is honored the rest of the body is honored? Explain physically and in the church. How does the list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:23 differ from the list in verses 8-10? How do those differences fit into Paul's correction of the Corinthians and do they indicate to us about spiritual gifts? What is the hierarchy of importance within that list? Where does the gift of tongues fit within the list? Why does Paul concentrate so much on the gift of tongues throughout 1 Corinthians 12-14? What happens to the body if a believer will not use their gift? What will happen to that believer? 1 Corinthians 12:31 transitions to Paul's continued discussion in chapter 13 about being spiritual and being loving - how does this transition help make that point.