

The Priority of the Body of Christ

Romans 12:1–5 (NKJV)

Romans 12:1–5 (NKJV)

12 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Introduction:

In the past few decades, a cancer has invaded the body of Christ. It is very destructive and deadly to the intended function and ministry of the church. And since the invention of the internet, social media and Youtube, the cancer has become pandemic.

This cancer supplants local leadership in churches and minimizes the need and effectiveness of the local member of the body. It exalts certain gifts and degrades others. It emphasizes popularity over priorities and makes ministry more what you see, hear and fill than how you serve. It radically changes the perspective of the church to what I can get than what I can give. The end result of this cancer is a “me” focused church where what is done is for me and about me.

It is a cancer that permeates through all the soft tissue and infects the main organs of the body and eventually finds its way into the bones. It strikes at the very DNA of the Body of Christ and renders it helpless and ineffective and eventually dead. And like cancer, the only way to treat it is complete annihilation. You have to kill it. You have to eliminated it from every cell of the Body. Any residual cancer will spread and cause as much or more damage that the original cancer caused.

This cancer has 2 main features and both are as deadly as the other.

1. Popularism
2. Professionalism.

What I mean by placing the “ism” on the word is that I am referring to a practice of a doctrine or the incorporation of an ideology to produce a certain result.

Both of these characteristics of this cancer has had devastating effects on the Church.

The First is Popularism

Or we could call it Celebrity Christianity. This includes all the popular preachers, teachers, musicians, singers, and entertainers.

Now for clarification, I am not including the popular false teachers here because I am sure and assume that you are not listening to them. The Benny Hines, Kenneth Copeland, Joyce Myers, Andy Stanley’s and Steven Furticks.

I want to bring this home to us. The church that is not seduced by the destructive heresy’s of these false teachers.

Im talking to the church that is orthodox, Biblical and Creedal. We desire Biblical exposition and Theological integrity. We are committed to the Fundamental evangelical doctrines of the Scripture and are committed to accuracy. We love the Bible and we love it taught correctly and we desire to live it and apply it within our church, family and community. So to be clear, I don't want us to think that I'm talking about the church over there or that group or this segment of society or the church. I'm talking about us.

And I am not saying because we have popular Preachers, Teachers and Singers that they are seeking that popularity. I can assure you that many of them don'd desire that kind of attention but would rather all the attention go to Christ.

But what I am talking about is how this cancer of Popularism, or celebrity Christianity has affected the church. Here are concerns I see.

1. An unhealthy elevation of a man in ministry.

There is a place for esteem that needs to be for the man of God or the preacher and elder who teaches the Word of God, but that can easily become an unhealthy elevation. It can become a situation where there first thing you do when faced

with a Biblical challenge is to see what your favorite preacher has to say about it and for some that settles it without consideration of what your local pastor may say or what a more labor intensive study of Scripture would produce. You end up in your own echo chamber only listening to the popular preacher or men who only say the same things. You can get to a point where you don't believe that your favorite preacher could be wrong and you are unwilling to read or listen to any other view or to challenge what is said.

2. It produces an unhealthy and deadly view of the local body of Christ.

There is often a minimization of the gifts of the local body of Christ due to the overemphasis of the popularity of a teacher or preacher or singer. This is especially seen in the attitude of "Ole, it's just you preaching today". The tragic implication of this is that unless it is so and so preacher than you don't really have anything to say or anything profound to teach me. And so since it just you, I will stay home or I will just listen to my favorite Bible teacher.

But have we become so arrogant that we believe the people who God has sovereignly placed in the

local body have nothing to say to us that can be beneficial or instructive.

It is God who gives gifts to his Body as it pleased Him and He has the goal and purpose of making you into the Image and likeness of Christ. So do you not think that God can't help you in that direction with the local Body?

3. Popularism has a tendency to produce isolation rather than infiltration.

Now, some of you are by nature isolationist. You are very comfortable being by yourself. You don't like crowds and you don't care for a lot of conversion and you may just not like people. And as far as engaging with people proactively, you would just rather not. And that is a problem that you will have to work hard had overcoming, especially when it comes to the Body of Christ. You are part of the body, whether you like it or not and it is never a good thing for a part of the body to be isolated unless you are cancer. Can you imagine being a part of the Body, like the pancreas, a relatively small part of the body, tucked away between the stomach, liver and large intestines. But imagine the pancreas saying, I would rather not participate, and in fact I would like

to isolate myself from the rest of the Body.... What is the result— —death.

But that is not what I am talking about with this point. Popularism and Celebrity Christians and produce a tendency to be with the ones I like the most. In other words I would rather be with the ones I like that are popular than you who are not. So instead of coming to Bible study or fellowship group or instead of coming to Wednesday Prayer and Bible study, Or instead of coming Bible Ed and Worship, I would rather listen to my favorite preacher or read my favorite author or do my own thing that I believe is best.

It's like smart phones in a doctors waiting room or video games in a home where the parents don't care.

In the doctors office, no one talks to each other, we just all stare at our phones

Or the home where the child spends all of his free time and more playing video games, isolated in the bedroom for hours at a time.

Both of these examples are destructive to the family and to the society.

This kind of isolation is also devastating to the body of Christ. Scripture says we are all one body and Members of one another. We are joined together by the same common life blood of Christ and are in great need of one another regardless of what part of the body you are. If you isolate at leg or arm, it dies. If you isolate the lung or the liver it dies. If you isolate a pinky or small toe it dies. Isolation kills and always has a negative impact on the body of Christ.

4. Popularism can lead to the implication of insignificance.

This is probably one of the most common problems in a local body. Because a member is not gifted a certain way or may not be articulate or outspoken, but because they may be quiet and not as well known, they are looked at as insignificant or not that important, or even worse, expendable.

Because you may not have a certain skill set or be gifted a certain way you are relegated to the shelf. You're good to look at every now and then, and you do make the shelf look full but if you are missing, it's not that big of a deal. We'll just get something else to fill the slot. After all, we have the most important

things over here at this conference or on this youtube channel.

This was a huge problem in the early church when some of the sign gifts were more prevalent, when prophecy and the miraculous gift of speaking other languages was more common. It was the tendency to emphasize the public gifts, the more showy gifts, the more miraculous gifts. And the ones that were not as public and well known, such as mercy and giving, and exhortation, were minimized, and considered not as important. Even certain apostles were placed on pedestals more than other Pastor teachers in the local assembly. This is exactly the problem we have today. We have people in the local body of Christ that place in over emphasis on the more publicly gifted people. The ones who have the better speaking skills, the ones who can preach more effectively. They ones who have a doctorate degrees in the PhD's. I want you wrote my certain book.

We may not have the miraculous gifts like the early church had but we still have the same problem of elevating certain gifts over others. And the devastating effect of the minimization of other gifts.

We often forget how much of the body that is never seen, is extremely significant and needed for the rest of the body to function. On our own physical body, we may see the outside skin, the eyes, the mouth, the nose, the ears, the hair, whether your big or small, tall or short, muscular or soft, but all the other details that make the outward body function are hidden. The mouth may speak and the tongue and lips may move to formulate the words, but nothing happens if the lungs don't inflate with air and push air over the vocal cords.

So popularism and the tendency to follow after celebrity Christianity needs to be avoided because:

1. It can produce an unhealthy elevation of a man in ministry.

2. It produces an unhealthy and deadly view of the local body of Christ.

3. Popularism has a tendency to produce isolation rather than infiltration.

4. Popularism can lead to the implication of insignificance

There is however, a second cancer that is eating through the Body Christ that has had devastating effect at producing a insignificant and meaningless

view of a large population of the membership of the body.

That is

2. Professionalism

Popularism is cancerous, but so is Professionalism.

This is the clergy/Laity division. The idea is that the ones “doing” the ministry are the professionals and no one else can do it....

Now, for clarification, I am not saying that there is not a place for pastors, teachers and deacons in the church. I’m not saying that God has not uniquely gifted certain men to lead the church. And I am not saying that there is not a place for a well trained person who specializes in counseling or raising children or conflict management or expository preaching.

What I am saying is that we have got to a point in some cases where we believe that the Body of Christ is ineffective and incompetent in certain area of the body of Christ so we need to hire the professional to do it.

The church has become like the wife who knows her husband can fix some things around the house

but would rather that they hire a professional. The husband can get it done, He may need to ask a few friends or read up on it and it may not be exactly the way the professional would have done it but it gets done.

We have short circuited the body of Christ that has been gifted by a sovereign God for the “professional”

We want the professional pastor, the professional counselor, the professional evangelist, the professional worship leader or the professional church manager etc....

But really is there Biblically such an animal.

Is there a pastor and then a professional pastor. Is there a Christian who counsels and then a professional counselor. Is there a worship leader and then a professional worship leaders. Is there even such as things as a professional church manager.

Like John Piper wrote in his book “Brothers, We Are Not Professionals”

“Is there professional praying? Professional trusting in God’s promises? Professional weeping

over souls? Professional musing on the depths of revelation? Professional rejoicing in the truth? Professional praising God's name? Professional treasuring the riches of Christ? Professional walking by the Spirit? Professional exercise of spiritual gifts? Professional dealing with demons? Professional pleading with backsliders? Professional perseverance in a hard marriage? Professional playing with children? Professional courage in the face of persecution? Professional patience with everyone?"

"These are not marginal activities in the pastoral life. They are central. They are the essence. Why do we choke on the word professional in those connections? Because professionalization carries the connotation of an education, a set of skills, and a set of guild-defined standards which are possible without faith in Jesus. Professionalism is not supernatural. The heart of ministry is."

Piper, John. Brothers, We Are Not Professionals (pp. 7-8). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. Piper, John. Brothers, We Are Not Professionals (p. 7). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

We are not dependent on the professional to accomplish the ministry. We don't need Ph.Ds that are educated in the elite schools, we need piety that

is dependent on the Word of God and the Spirit of God through prayer.

Christianity is not professional, it is supernatural.

What happens with the professionalization of Christianity is the Body of Christ and its giftedness is relegated to a secondary role instead of primary. It is considered minimally helpful, if at all helpful and needed.

You need the professional to sort it all out. You need the man or woman with the education and degrees.

Now again, I am not saying that there is not a place for education but I am saying that the minimization of the simplicity of the Body of Christ is dangerous and defective.

Listen to how Paul addressed the issue
1 Corinthians 3:3–11 (NKJV)

³ For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men? ⁴ For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I *am* of Apollos,” are you not carnal?

⁵ Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered,

but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:10–15 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's *household*, that there are contentions among you. ¹² Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I

am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.

1 Corinthians 4:1–6 (NKJV)

Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

.....⁶ Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

Paul, despised the exaltation and professionalization of his ministry. He wanted them to know that he has a place in the Body and is man who pulls his ore and plants the seed and builds the a foundation but he is not the only on that matters. Today’s American evangelical church needs to own that rebuke. Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians is the Spirit’s admonition to us. We need to examine ourselves to see if we’ve been committing the sin of

admiring Christ's servants more than Christ. If so, we should confess, repent, and worship God alone.

That's exactly why Paul said what he said in 1 Corinthians 1-4. He recounted for the Corinthians how intentionally *countercultural* he was in his ministry. "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom . . . I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom" (1 Corinthians 2:1, 3, 4).

The rock stars of Paul's day were called *sophists*, public speakers with silver tongues. They wielded tremendous oratorical skill as experts in rhetoric and debate. They were witty, charming, and could sway audiences with ease. Sophists traveled the conference circuit (not unlike some of our own celebs), drawing massive crowds, dazzling and impressing the hoi polloi by waxing eloquent on *any* subject, ascending esoteric heights or even making mundane subjects sound absolutely sublime. In a day without mass media—radio, television, Internet—the sophists were *it*.

Contrary to common sense, Paul wanted to be as *unlike* the sophists as possible. What was he thinking?

Didn't Paul want to attract big crowds? Didn't he want to see vast numbers, *swarms* of people, coming to Christ?

It's not that Paul was unconcerned about results. In fact, he was *so* concerned about results that he chose to subvert cultural expectations. He didn't give the people what they wanted; instead, he gave them what they needed—a faithful proclamation of the gospel message. Paul proclaimed “the testimony of God” to the Corinthians, determining “to know nothing among [them] except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1, 2). He wanted to get himself out of the way, to give the Corinthians a “demonstration of the Spirit and of power” in the clear, plain proclamation of the gospel, so their “faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5).

And why did Paul take that approach? Because the wisdom of men *damns* men. It's only the power of God in the gospel that saves them.

No true Christian *intentionally* sets out to prop up and worship a celebrated pastor. And no faithful pastor, celebrated or despised, wants his congregation to worship him either. That anyone would even be tempted to elevate him is a terrifying thought.

But the danger is with us at all times, in all cultures. From Corinth to America, from the first century to the twenty-first, *all* cultures are celebrity cultures, prone to worship its guitar heroes and rock stars. It's the danger of idolatry that lurks in every human heart. Even the aged apostle John was susceptible to elevating the creature above the Creator.

And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."
(Revelation 22:8-9)

Knowing the danger that lurks within our own hearts—especially insidious in American culture, with the incessant temptations provided by modern media—it's our job as Christians, pastor and congregation alike, to obey the command of the angel:

"Worship God." And worship Him alone.

<https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B120515/~>

There is the temptation to exalt the professional and forget the Body of Christ.

We have forgotten the profound importance of the simple meeting together and sharing your burdens and struggles with a fellow believer and they to have that brother or sister, tell you that they love you and are walking with you and will pray for you and share a scripture that has changed their life.

The Disciples of Christ turned the world upside down for Christ without the first degree at the end of there name. They were effective, not because they where educated, but because they where dedicated. They love Christ, loved His Word and were willing to live it if it cost them their life.

If we are going to be effective in the ministry, we don't need the professional people to do it while we watch it get done. No... we need sacrificial people who are willing to give their all to Christ and have there mind transformed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

John Piper writes a prayer in his book stating, "Banish professionalism from our midst, O God, and

in its place put passionate prayer, poverty of spirit, hunger for God, rigorous study of holy things, white-hot devotion to Jesus Christ, utter indifference to all material gain, and unremitting labor to rescue the perishing, perfect the saints, and glorify our sovereign Lord. In Jesus' great and powerful name. Amen.”

Piper, John. Brothers, We Are Not Professionals (p. 8). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

These 2 things,

The popularism in Christianity
and the

Professionalism in Christianity

has so minimized the gifted body of Christ that it is becoming easier and easier for believers to stay home and watch church. I'm not talking about the ones who are physically unable to attend, I'm not taking about the sick and disabled,

Im talking about the growing population of Christians that are disconnecting from a local body because they have been seduced into believing that local assembly of the body of Christ is not important in their life.

The sad reality is that this has a negative and long lasting affect two ways

1. It affects the person who does not attend and participate and fellowship, because they miss the benefits of the the body of Christ. It is like a finger being separated from the body, and missing the life giving blood and nutrients the body gives.

2. It affects the local body because that finger is gone or that gift of mercy or exhortation or teaching is absent. So the Body is disabled and not able to function at its best.

This is so critical and so important to Paul that after 11 chapters of profound teaching on the topic of Salvation, begins by calling for Total unreserved Devotion to Christ through a Biblical transformed mind,

and that leads him to the first application of the profound devotion.

HOW WE INTERACT WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST..... HIS CHURCH, HIS BRIDE, HIS SHEEP.

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself*

more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

It is amazing to me the emphasis Paul places on this at the very beginning of his application. But then again, it should not be shocking given the problems he has had with this in the other churches and what problems we see in our day as well. It is a huge and often neglected area in the church.

What Paul teaches here is the ABC of church life or Body life. But as we often need it, we need to be reminded.

Lesson:

I. The Admonition

II. The Anatomy

III. The Analogy

I. The Admonition

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

To emphasize the necessity of meekness, Paul uses a form of *phroneō* (**to think**) four times in verse 3. A Christian is not to overestimate himself, to **think more highly** (*hyperphroneō*) **of himself than he ought to think**, but is to think of himself as he really is. He is not to overvalue his abilities, his gifts, or his worth but make an accurate estimate of himself. “For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing,” Paul elsewhere cautions, “he deceives himself” (Gal. 6:3). And an honest estimate will be very low (cf. 1 Tim. 1:12–16).

Referring to self-examination and judgment of other Christians, Paul told the Corinthian church, “Now these things brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in

order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (1 Cor. 4:6–7; cf. 1–5). Peter admonished all elders in the church, young and old, to “clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5).

To have sound judgment translates a compound (*sōphroneō*) of that verb and has the basic meaning of “to think with a sound mind, to think soberly” (as the kjv). **To think** of ourselves with **sound judgment** leads us to recognize that, in ourselves, we are nothing at all, but that, in Christ, we can be used to the glory of God through the gift of the Spirit bestowed on us. We must realize that from ourselves, from our fleshly humanness, nothing eternal can be produced, but that in the power of the Spirit we can be used to build the kingdom and honor the King.

People do not suffer from low self-esteem. Rather, they are proud. That is the essential attitude of human nature. Selfish pride dominates the flesh. To be useful to our Lord, we must honestly recognize our limits as fallen men and women as well as our

abilities as new creations in Christ, keeping both in proper perspective.

Such humility, which is essential for all spiritual matters, is not easily found or maintained. In New Testament times, some churches were characterized by members who desired to have the more showy and spectacular gifts, the church at Corinth being the chief offender. Paul therefore warns them rather to “earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way,” the way of humble love (1 Cor. 12:31; cf. 13:1–13). With a clearly-implied rebuke, the apostle John identifies a self-seeking believer by name, a man named Diotrophes, “who loves to be first” (3 John 9). Sadly, the church is still well-saturated with members who proudly seek personal preeminence and thereby forfeit the power of humility....

Long before the advent of modern psychology, theologians confronted the devastating effects of self-love. In the early days of the church, Augustine wrote in his classic work *The City of God*, “Two cities have been formed by two loves; the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God, the heavenly by the love of God even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord” (*Civitas Dei*, XIV, 28. Cited by John

Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past* [Minneapolis: Bethany, 1975], p. 46).

The great Reformer John Calvin observed,

For so blindly do we all rush in the direction of self-love that everyone thinks he has a good reason for exalting himself and despising all others in comparison.... There is no other remedy than to pluck up by the roots those most noxious pests, self-love and love of victory.... This the doctrine of Scripture does. For it teaches us to remember that the endowments which God has bestowed upon us are not our own, but His free gifts, and that those who plume themselves upon them betray their ingratitude. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, 2 vols. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966], 2:10)

Addressing the problem in a positive way, the writer of Hebrews admonishes, “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:24–25).

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, **as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.**

Paul goes on to say, will mean thinking of oneself *in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you* (lit. ‘as God has distributed a measure of faith to each of you’). Exactly what the apostle means by ‘a measure of faith’ has been interpreted in different ways.

One view is that it is to be related to the different gifts of ministry believers receive from God and their faith in exercising these. This view is consistent with the way Paul uses the word ‘measure’ elsewhere in connection with what God assigns to particular people. Thus in 2 Corinthians 10:13 Paul speaks of the ‘measure’ of the field for missionary endeavor God assigned (lit. ‘measured’) to him (cf. Gal. 2:7–9), and in Ephesians 4:7 he speaks of the grace given to each believer ‘according to the measure of Christ’s gift’ (NRSV), which he then interprets in terms of gifts of ministry (Eph 4:8–13). When, here in 12:3, Paul speaks of the ‘measure of faith’ God has given to believers, he is probably also thinking in

terms of gifts for ministry, for this is what the apostle speaks of in the following verses (12:4–8).

Another view is that ‘the measure of faith’ refers not to some special form of faith given to different individuals, but to basic Christian faith which all believers have in the same ‘measure’. Moo, for example, asserts: ‘ “Measure of faith”, then, should be compared in this paragraph not to the many different “gifts” that God distributes to believers, but to the one common grace from which they stem (v. 6). It is that faith which believers have in common as fellow members of the body of Christ that Paul here highlights as the standard against which each of us is to estimate himself’. Dunn comments on ‘faith’ in a way that preserves both the commonality of the basic faith of all believers and the differing gifts they exercise: ‘This trust, which is the common denominator of all Christians (= believers), Paul clearly sees as variable in different believers.... Here there is no sharp distinction in fact between “saving faith” and “miracle-working faith” (as in 1 Cor. 12:9). Both indicate that measure of reliance on God which enables *charis* [‘grace’] to come to expression in *charisma* [‘gift’]’.

There are good arguments in favor of both views, and each can be related to Paul’s purpose in writing. The view that ‘the measure of faith’ is to be

interpreted as the basic faith of all believers has the advantage of reinforcing Paul's aim of minimizing division and promoting unity among Jewish and Gentile believers. The view that it should be interpreted in connection with the various gifts of ministry of different believers has the advantage of relevance to the immediate context, and is therefore probably preferable

Kruse, C. G. (2012). [*Paul's Letter to the Romans*](#) (D. A. Carson, Ed.; pp. 468–469). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos.

I. The Admonition

II. The Anatomy

⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,

The picture here is of the human body... Paul is referring to the many members or parts of the body that make up the body... The arm is not the body, but part of the body. The leg is not the body but part of the body. The eye or nose is not the body but

part of the body. There is great diversity and differences in the body members or parts but all of the individual body parts make up the whole body.

Each part of the body has a different function than other parts. The eye does not do what the foot does and foot can't do what the mouth does. The arm can't function as the neck and the neck can't do what the leg does. Each part is unique, and especially designed to do an intended function.

“Because it is so normal and dependable, the great wonder of the proper operation of our bodies is seldom appreciated or even noticed. We have but to think, and our hands, feet, or eyes immediately do what we want them to do. Because we have trained them to respond in certain ways, they do many things almost automatically. Our most critical bodily functions—such as our hearts' beating and our lungs' breathing—require no thought at all. They simply do their jobs, performing their divinely-designed functions minute after minute, day after day, year after year. The interrelationship of the parts of our bodies is so unbelievably intricate that medical science continually discovers new functions

and relationships. It is often only when our bodies cease to function properly that we appreciate how marvelously God has designed them.

In his book *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, the internationally renowned surgeon Dr. Paul Brand writes of the amazing diversity and interrelationship of the parts of the human body. Speaking of the body's cells, he says:

I am first struck by their variety. Chemically my cells are almost alike, but visually and functionally they are as different as the animals in a zoo. Red blood cells, discs resembling Lifesaver candies, voyage through my blood loaded with oxygen to feed the other cells. Muscle cells, which absorb so much of that nourishment, are sleek and supple, full of coiled energy. Cartilage cells with shiny black nuclei look like bunches of black-eyed peas glued tightly together for strength. Fat cells seem lazy and leaden, like bulging white plastic garbage bags jammed together.

Bone cells live in rigid structures that exude strength. Cut in cross section, bones resemble tree rings, overlapping strength with strength, offering impliability and sturdiness. In contrast, skin cells form undulating patterns of softness and texture that rise and dip, giving shape and beauty

to our bodies. They curve and jut at unpredictable angles so that every person's fingerprint—not to mention his or her face—is unique.

The aristocrats of the cellular world are the sex cells and nerve cells. A woman's contribution, the egg, is one of the largest cells in the human body, its ovoid shape just visible to the unaided eye. It seems fitting that all the other cells in the body should derive from this elegant and primordial structure. In great contrast to the egg's quiet repose, the male's tiny sperm cells are furiously flagellating tadpoles with distended heads and skinny tails. They scramble for position as if competitively aware that only one of billions will gain the honor of fertilization.

The king of cells, the one I have devoted much of my life to studying, is the nerve cell. It has an aura of wisdom and complexity about it. Spiderlike, it branches out and unites the body with a computer network of dazzling sophistication. Its axons, "wires" carrying distant messages to and from the human brain, can reach a yard in length.

I never tire of viewing these varied specimens or thumbing through books which render cells. Individually they seem puny and oddly designed,

but I know these invisible parts cooperate to lavish me with the phenomenon of life....

My body employs a bewildering zoo of cells, none of which individually resembles the larger body. Just so, Christ's Body comprises an unlikely assortment of humans. Unlikely is precisely the right word, for we are decidedly unlike one another and the One we follow. From whose design come these comical human shapes which so faintly reflect the ideals of the Body as a whole?

The Body of Christ, like our own bodies, is composed of individual, unlike cells that are knit together to form one Body. He is the whole thing, and the joy of the Body increases as individual cells realize they can be diverse without becoming isolated outposts.

Dr. Brand also describes the unity of the seemingly endless diversity of the cells.

What moves cells to work together? What ushers in the higher specialized functions of movement, sight, and consciousness through the coordination of a hundred trillion cells?

The secret to membership lies locked away inside each cell nucleus, chemically coiled in a strand of DNA. Once the egg and sperm share their inheritance, the DNA chemical ladder splits

down the center of every gene much as the teeth of a zipper pull apart. DNA reforms itself each time the cell divides: 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 cells, each with the identical DNA. Along the way cells specialize, but each carries the entire instruction book of one hundred thousand genes. DNA is estimated to contain instructions that, if written out, would fill a thousand six-hundred-page books. A nerve cell may operate according to instructions from volume four and a kidney cell from volume twenty-five, but both carry the whole compendium. It provides each cell's sealed credential of membership in the body. Every cell possesses a genetic code so complete that the entire body could be reassembled from information in any one of the body's cells....

Just as the complete identity code of my body inheres in each individual cell, so also the reality of God permeates every cell in [Christ's] Body, linking us members with a true, organic bond. I sense that bond when I meet strangers in India or Africa or California who share my loyalty to the Head; instantly we become brothers and sisters, fellow cells in Christ's Body. I share the ecstasy of community in a universal Body that includes every man and woman in whom God resides. (Taken from

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made, by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancy. Copyright [CO] 1980 by Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancy. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House)

There are also rebellious cells, as it were, in the Body of Christ. Some are benign, in the sense that they do not destroy the church. They simply gorge themselves on blessings and benefits at the expense of the rest of the body. They become fatter and fatter, always taking in, seldom giving out. The focus of their whole existence is self-service. Their creed is: “I will get all I can from God and all I can from the church.” In their unfaithfulness to the Lord and to His people, they sap the church of its vitality and can so weaken it that it becomes emaciated and cannot function normally.

The church also has “cells” that are mutinous to the point of destruction. Through outright heresy and flagrant immorality, these malignant members openly attack the rest of the body, eating away at its very life.

As believers, we are all interrelated in a spiritual unity. Christ has designed us to work uniquely but harmoniously as His Body on earth—to be His own hands, His own feet, His own voice. We share a common life, a common ministry, a common power, and, above all, a common Head. We are endowed in countless different combinations of the specific gifts mentioned here and elsewhere in the New

Testament. But it is our Lord's design and desire that our diversity in spiritual gifts be manifested in unity of spiritual service."

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). [Romans](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 164–166). Moody Press.

I. The Admonition

II. The Anatomy

III. The Analogy

Romans 12:4–6 (NKJV)

⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith;

1 Corinthians 12:4–7 (NKJV)

⁴ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.
⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same

Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*:

1 Corinthians 12:11–27 (NKJV)

¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

¹² For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.

¹⁵ If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body?

¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling? ¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where *would* the body *be*?

²⁰ But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. ²¹ And 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.” ²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. ²³ And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable *parts* have greater modesty, ²⁴ but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, ²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

