

I Corinthians Lesson # 28
Gifts of The Spirit Continued
Pentwater Bible Church
Daniel E. Woodhead
May 9, 2010

I Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

This verse forms an excellent three-part analogy of the human body compared to the work of the Spirit in providing cohesion to His Body of Believers. (a) The human body is a unit. (b) The human body has many parts, with a necessary diversity in its members. (c) The parts of the human body work together as one, with a dependent mutuality as each part fulfills an important function. Likewise the body of Christ has a diversity of parts functioning together. It seems that the Corinthians being very worldly all wanted to speak in tongues or prophecy. They wanted the showier or the gifts that were the most visible. Paul will explain in the section of Scripture that *all* the gifts are important for the *complete* functioning of the Body of Christ. This unity of the Body of believers can only exist if there are no heresies being promulgated. I Corinthians 11: 18-19 explains that heresies cause schisms so that selected believers will be raised up to speak out against them. Unity without truth is empty and the Spirit will not be there to unify.

Of what two bodies does Paul refer? The Body of believers and our human bodies

I Corinthians 12: 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Christ said that he would send the Holy Spirit (John 16: 7-8). One of the roles of the Spirit is to provide gifts and unify the greater Body of believers through His work. The One who gave the diverse gifts, the Spirit, was also the medium in which, by which, and with which that unity exists. The baptism of the Spirit is experienced by all who believe, at the moment of salvation (cf. Rom. 8:9). In that baptism, believers, regardless of nationality (whether Jews or Greeks) or station of life (slave or free), are identified with Christ (baptized . . . into one body) and are indwelt by the Spirit (given the one Spirit to drink; cf. John 4:14; 7:38-39). This unifying work of the Holy Spirit in the Body is the major distinguishing factor between believers and unbelievers.

Who actually provides baptism of a believer? The Holy Spirit

I Corinthians 12: 14-15 For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

Paul established that the entire ekklesia is one worldwide body from the first that came in until the Rapture. He then goes ahead to show the necessary diversity of the

individual components. Individual parts cannot separate themselves without harming the entire body. One is not better than others either. A foot cannot say leave the body because it is not a hand, which might seem more desirable to some. In the same way a believer who does not have some particular gift that they believe is more desirable, cannot consider themselves apart from the church for that reason. Some in Corinth who had the gift of tongues taught that unless one had that gift one was not as good a member as they were. Some still teach that without speaking in tongues one does not truly have the indwelling Spirit. This is not true. All parts are needed to function as God intended. Through this comparative illustration, which we call a metaphor, Paul makes the examples understandable to us.

Do all believers get the same Spiritual gifts? NO

I Corinthians 12: 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

The same as with the foot and the hand it is also with the ear and the eye. What is important to see in Paul's exposition of the two body parts is; that it is as if they are speaking to one another with the ear feeling inferior to the eye and therefore left out of usefulness to the body.

I Corinthians 12: 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

All the gifts are individually selected by God for each believer and are vital for the effective functioning of the Body of Christ. These gifts are supernatural powers and cannot be changed according to an individual's preference. If everyone wanted to be an eye then the body might see well but could not hear. If hearing were the popular choice in preference then there would be no sense of smell. With this illustration it is easy to see that within the body of believers we should not desire other's gifts. That is not operating in the Spirit but the flesh. This is outside God's will.

I Corinthians 12: 18-20 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body.

So here is the direct comparison of the Body of Christ to our human bodies. Just as Christ caused our bodies to be made of individual parts He created His Church to also function as a whole with individual parts. We can easily see the absurdity of the entire Church vying for the same Spiritual gift. It would never work as Christ intended. One body-many parts is the way the Lord ordained it to be. We are placed just as Christ intended us to be so we might serve Him effectively.

I Corinthians 12: 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Just as each should not envy another's Spiritual gift we cannot say there is no need for some gifts. We should never look down on others in the Church that have different gifts than us because they are all necessary for complete and harmonious functioning of the Body of Christ.

I Corinthians 12: 22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

Those who think they have the more visible Spiritual gifts must never look down on those with the weakest members who have what seems to be the least important gifts. Those with the more visible gifts could never function without the gifts that are being exercised in the background. In reality the least visible gifts are those that indeed the most needed.

Are some Spiritual gifts better than others: No

I Corinthians 12: 23-26 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

The less honorable human body parts are a reference to sexual and human waste exit vehicles. It is these parts, which we carefully protect from the eyes of others. Appearances are deceiving, all parts of the body are necessary even the ones which should not be seen. The *so-called* lesser gifts are actually more necessary than the openly displayed ones. God does this to ensure harmony for the body. God combined the members that members of the spiritual body would demonstrate a mutual concern for the well being of others so that rivalry would cease so that there should be no division in the body; and genuine unity would exist. As with the human body when one part is harmed all the entire body experiences a sense of suffering. Believers should share others burdens in order to help lighten them. There is no room for jealousy or strife when one person receives praise; all should rejoice in the adulation because it is actually for the entire body and ultimately to God since He gave the supernatural abilities we call Spiritual gifts.

Does God bestow greater honor to some Spiritual gifts? Yes to those, which we think, are in a human sense less honorable.

I Corinthians 12: 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

This is the one statement that expresses the unity and diversity of the Church. Our actions should reflect the character of Christ.

I Corinthians 12: 28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Paul gives us the order of hierarchy that God has ordained in His Church. The gift of apostleship is the most prominent. There were only twelve of them, which provided the starting emphasis for the Church. They all saw Christ, were sent out by Him and preached the Gospel. They had special powers to do so. Next he listed prophets and teachers. Those three kinds of gifted members—apostles, prophets, and teachers—probably were rated lower than those who had the more spectacular gift of tongues. But the first three gifts may have been greater (v. 31) because of their extensive value to the whole body of Christ. This may be why he listed them first and then said that the church should eagerly desire (v. 31) the exercise of those gifts in the assembly (cf. 14:1-5). Gifted apostles, prophets, and teachers characteristically ministered to a *whole* church, and so would engender unity and mutual edification. The gift of tongues, on the other hand, suited the Corinthian need for the pursuit of personal freedom. This self-centeredness also afflicted the church in other areas (e.g., eating sacrificial foods, women in worship, celebration of the Lord's Supper).

I Corinthians 12: 29-31a Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts:

This is a rhetorical question with has an obvious answer of NO. Believers should be grateful for how God has gifted each of us individually to come together as a whole and function for the glory of God as he intended. But we must seek our gifts through pray and service within the body of believers.

What is the purpose of the gifts? To build up the body and function for the glory of God and achieve His purposes on earth through us.

I Corinthians 12: 31b and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

This is Paul's lead in to the life of a believer that should be characterized by love for others. The first fruit of the Spirit is love (Galatians 5:22).

Questions? Contact Daniel Woodhead at: 616-928-0974 or e-mail at:
Pentwaterbiblechurch@scofieldinstitute.org