

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Verses 12-14:

--Here Paul is going to illustrate the point he is making to the Corinthians with the image of the body of Christ. This is a wonderful and encouraging illustration that can be applied in many ways, but it is incredibly important that we do not forget the main point that Paul is making with the Corinthians—that spiritual gifts have unity without uniformity because of who God is.

--No doubt, Paul Himself could never forget those words that Christ spoke to him!

Acts 9:4-5: *Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."*

--You will notice in these verses (**12-14**) that the emphasis is obvious in the repetition of the word **one**. Paul is establishing the reality of **one body** (unity) with **many members** (diversity) which **is Christ** (divinely organized and directed).

--(**13**) This passage is not Paul making remarks about a second blessing for complete sanctification or to make us an active part of the body—nor is it about the rites of baptism or communion. The Scriptures make a clear distinction between baptism in water or the Spirit (**Mt. 3:11; Jn. 1:33; Acts 1:5**).

--What Paul is showing here—as he did in **1-3** of this chapter—is that they all became members of Christ's body by being immersed into one element—the Holy Spirit. Baptized into one body—the Church. Controlled by one power—Christ Jesus.

--Again, the Holy Spirit is what makes us a believer. If you don't have the Spirit of Christ you are not a Christian! (**2:10-14; 12:1-3; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:2-3**).

--So we are baptized into the Spirit and we continually drink from the Spirit. We are connected and controlled and sustained by the same Holy Spirit—behind all the Church of God is a singular mind, heart, and will.

--So, collectively we are all made into one body by the Spirit and individually we receive of the Spirit's supply day by day.

--This is true, ***whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free!*** We are united by the Spirit of Christ in a way that should be greater than: Racial lines; Societal lines; Political lines; Social lines; and even Blood lines! ***To work against the unity established by Christ is a serious thing and those who do so should make sure their reasons are God's!***

--The unity that Christians have in Christ is a reality to be recognized—not an ideal to be created. We cannot create it. He already did. We simply need to recognize it and keep it.

Verses 15-19:

--Here Paul begins to address the attitude of those that feel inferior in the body of Christ. There are envious, jealous, isolating, self-deprecating, and discouraged Christians like this in every local body.

--The reality is, like a foot that wants to be a hand, or an ear that wants to be an eye, we cannot quit or leave the body because we do not like our place. Being a part of the body of Christ isn't a side job.

--And, if we all just picked our own place, we would be a big monstrosity because we would all pick the same things! *Paul is rebuking every emphasis that the work of the Holy Spirit needs to be the *same* for everyone—tongues for everyone, healing for everyone, riches for everyone, miracles for everyone, etc.*

--**(18)** Here is the key. The body has been **set** to please God not man. **Set** by God Himself.

--Where I am, when I live, whether I am a man or woman; rich or poor; free or persecuted; the very expression of the Holy Spirit in my life is all **set** to please God.

--First, this should be an encouragement because it means that my gifts—no matter how inferior looking to me—do please Him! *They are all His graces flowing through our lives. They are literally what Jesus would do if He were here with us.*

--Second, this pure motive of pleasing Him over man *will* be challenged in all of our lives. You will make people happy, but then you will come to a place where you will not make people happy, and maybe even make yourself unhappy! What happens then? Will you surrender your God-given task to please yourself or others?

--Without the Headship of Christ—our unity and diversity in Him—we would have no body.

Verses 20-26:

--**(20-21)** Now, Paul flips to the other side of the argument and deals with those that feel superior. There are self-exalting, prideful, and hard Christians in every local church body that feel totally independent of those they consider inferior.

--The reality is that the eye or head cannot say to the hand or feet we don't really need you! Some of the spiritual elitests in Corinth apparently felt like they could do without other lowly members of the body of Christ.

--**(22-24)** Here Paul makes the point that every part of the spiritual body is necessary just as every part of your physical body is necessary to the health of the whole. God honors in His design and purposes what others tend to dishonor or consider foolish. *Just think of the humble and quiet life of Jesus Christ Himself—three years in public ministry but thirty years in the quiet home-circle and workbench.*

--How often have we come to something in our physical life that we don't think about—or even know about—until it becomes a problem: pituitary gland; thyroid; retina; liver; intestines; etc.

--All of these play essential roles in our physical life in the same way many believers, in humble and unseen ways, are playing essential roles in the body of Christ. They are providing—in God's design—health in ways only God knows. *Especially the ministry of intercession—Praying Hyde*

--If they became spiritually unhealthy, or were removed, what would be the spiritual loss?!

--(25-26) This is not what *should* happen in a healthy physical body but what *does* happen.

Stubbed toe illustration

--All of our Christian life—public and alone—matters because we *are* a part of the body of Christ whether we like it or not. We are all adding strength or weakness.

*Bonhoeffer (Life Together): “Is the invisible presence of the Christian fellowship a reality and a help to the individual? Do the intercessions of others carry him through the day? Is the Word of God close to him as a comfort and a strength? Or does he misuse his aloneness contrary to the fellowship, the Word, and the prayer? The individual must realize that his hours of aloneness react upon the community. In his solitude he can sunder and besmirch the fellowship, or he can strengthen and hallow it. Every act of self-control of the Christian is also a service to the fellowship.”

On the other hand, there is no sin in thought, word, or deed, no matter how personal or secret, that does not inflict injury upon the whole fellowship. An element of sickness gets into the body; perhaps nobody knows where it comes from or in what member it has lodged, but the body is infected. This is the proper metaphor for the Christian community. We *are* members of a body, not only when we choose to be, but in our whole existence. Every member serves the whole body, either to its health or to its destruction. This is no mere theory; it is a spiritual reality. And the Christian community has often experienced its effects with disturbing clarity, sometimes destructively and sometimes fortunately.”*

--So we should weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. We are in this together—on purpose. *Can we rejoice if others faithfully use the gifts we wish we had?*

--God is working His will on earth through His *entire* body. He is not looking for lone appendages to serve Him irrespective of the other parts of His body.

*Nee (The Normal Christian Life): “*Alone I cannot serve the Lord effectively, and he will spare no pains to teach me this. He will bring things to an end, allowing doors to close and leaving me ineffectively knocking my head against a blank wall until I realize that I need the help of the Body as well as of the Lord. For the life of Christ is the life of the Body, and his gifts are given to us for the work that builds up the Body.*”*

Verses 27-31:

--(27) This was both locally and corporately true. We *are* the body of Christ. The summation being: The body of Christ requires diversity—not uniformity—in spiritual gifts and ministries to the pleasure of God and the health of the body.

--So this section of rhetorical questions demands that every faithful Bible believing Christian rejects the false teaching that all *must* speak in tongues (or display any other gift)—or that gifts may be taught by man opposed to given by the Spirit of God.

--(28) There is some argument here as to whether Paul is saying these gifts are listed as a history of the establishment of the church or in terms of importance.

--Paul does talk about the church being established by the functioning gifts of apostles and prophets—particularly in **Ephesians 2:20 + 4:11-12**.

--I think there is some validity to both views. It could be a both-and situation instead of either-or. That said, the gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher, etc. are only more important in terms of practical *function* Vs. actual *value* which has been Paul's whole point.

--We are equal in the body of Christ the same way that brothers and sisters are equal in a family. They are still very different and have different gifts but they are family.

--Some spiritual gifts help to prepare others for the use of their gifts. They are foundational in the order of how God is working things out in the life of His body. *My job as a pastor-teacher is to help you become mature in spiritual knowledge and therefore better prepared to use your gifts!*

--**Apostles:** There are still apostolic gifts as men are sent as messengers of God to particular areas: Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Martin Luther, Hudson Taylor, Chuck Smith, etc. *Crazy abuses—just remember what Paul said about apostles in **4:6-13!***

--**Prophets:** Still those speaking God's message with insight and foresight. These are not always exclusive as both Barnabas and Paul were listed with prophets and teachers .

Acts 13:1: Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

--Some of these other gifts are self-explanatory and we must remember the diversity in their usage so as not to be too specified and box God's work into our own molds.

--That said, **helps** is worth noting as a divinely given gift! How wonderful to have around people that are actually helpful!

--Also, **administrations** could also be *governments* and is a unique word used only here in the NT. It has the idea of piloting. How wonderful to have people around that can pilot things!

--**Tongues** must be mentioned because of the abuses then and now. Diversity in the Spirit includes tongues but will not allow it to be exclusive. This much must be said, everyone speaking in tongues when the whole church meets makes the body one big tongue and it is wrong.

--Now, some good and godly men and women do so because that is what they have been taught. Simply take them to this passage and let the Holy Spirit do His own work on them! You are still connected with them. *Sad when you see people hurt because they cannot speak in tongues or know they are faking it and feel like they are inferior in the body!*

--**(31)** This is not love Vs. the gifts but love as the **way** for all spiritual gifts to be found, grown, and expressed.

--Let's remember what the world did with Jesus' body. They crucified it! **We will not have this man to reign over us!**