

## 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

### “One Body, Many Members”

Spiritual gifts are a matter of great interest in the church today. Many are confused & uncertain as to their applications/operations. Wondering, are they for today & in what way do they evidence themselves when at work?

Typically (I have discovered) that the pendulum swings 1 of 2 ways. Either to the extreme of abuse/misuse, people acting all mystical or what I might refer to as “hyper-spiritual” in their gatherings. Or people who don’t believe in the gifts at all, so you’d find more life at a funeral service than you do at their corporate times together! The Bible doesn’t give credence/credibility to either extreme.

Nowhere in your Bible will you find it taught that the gifts of the Spirit were for a certain era, no longer needed today... Equally true, we discover (w/just a nominal amount of study) that the ministry of the Holy Spirit will always be *edifying* to the body of believers & *glorifying* to Christ. He won’t draw attention to Himself or anyone else, He won’t diminish or in any way belittle the character of Christ (be it through weirdness or some kind of verbal assault). He will only point people *to* Jesus, exhort dependence *upon* Jesus, admonish us to trust wholeheartedly *in* Jesus... Somehow & in some-way He will direct our eyes, our hearts, our minds upon the Lord (who has loved us & given Himself for us).

His ministry will work tremendous absolute unity through considerable diversity. – The way He accomplishes this is through various/sundry gifts that He gives to individual believers. Last week, we took the time to briefly consider several of the gifts (word of wisdom, work of knowledge, faith, gifts of healings, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits). Again, these gifts bring edification to the body, glorification to Christ.

The question that comes up (not uncommonly) in the Christian community regards what Paul brings up here in Vs 10. “To another, kinds of tongues...” What’s the deal w/tongues? Is this something that’s legit, are people faking it? To which I would respond... Yes... Again, let me reiterate, the bible nowhere indicates that tongues would cease w/the apostolic ministry or the early church in ancient history.

But somewhere along the way, someone started purporting that the evidence of having the Holy Spirit in your life (& thus the evidence of salvation) is the ability to speak in tongues... Others may concede that tongues aren’t necessary for salvation, but it *is* the evidence of being “filled” w/or “Baptized” in the Spirit (different groups call it different things).

In both cases (however) such insistence on tongues being the absolute proof of having the power of the Holy Spirit upon your life has led to innumerable amounts of people seeking after this gift & even counterfeiting the gift so as to prove to themselves & assure others that they really are filled w/the Spirit & to me that's a tragedy...

What is the gift of tongues? The word simply means, "Languages". It would be a language that you're not familiar w/personally, but God understands it perfectly. It requires a bypass of your intellect & a stepping forward in faith. Now, it may be simple & repetitive, it may or may not be something that others understand. (Meaning if someone's gift of tongues was speaking in some ancient Incan or Aztec language, how would *that* sound to our ears? How many dead languages are there today? I have no idea.) Nor are the languages the Holy Spirit may give limited to human language. Paul mentions in the next Ch that tongues may include the language of *angels*... what does *that* sound like? So just because someone may make utterance in what seems to be an undiscernible dialect, that doesn't mean it's illegitimate. But understand that gift of tongues is exercised from man to God. It's never a gift that reverses that flow, being from God to man (that's prophecy).

Many times, you'll hear someone speak in tongues & then someone will give a "Thus says the Lord," follow up. However, what they're doing isn't interpreting, they're prophesying. Prophecy is from God to man. Tongues is from man to God. –

What's the purpose of the gift? Prayer, praise & thanksgiving. Remember Acts Ch 2? When the Holy Spirit was poured out & the disciples (about 120 in number) began speaking in tongues (not necessarily at one time, the bible says that they did so as the Spirit gave them utterance). There were people in the city (being Pentecost) from all over the Roman world. The disciples were all Galileans... They didn't know these distant languages from every corner of the known world... Yet, they were speaking fluently in these different dialects. The people were blown away. They started talking to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."<sup>1</sup>

They weren't preaching the gospel. They weren't issuing forth, "Thus says the Lord..."

<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ac 2:7–11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

When it came time to share the gospel, the tongues ceased, Peter stood up & preached in the common Greek language of the day... They were giving God praise, proclaiming His wonderful works... In Ch 14 of this letter, Paul will tell them that when they speak in tongues, they're *giving thanks* & that's great & well, but the problem is that if there isn't an interpreter (or everyone is all speaking at one time), the body isn't edified. It brings confusion & weirds people out who come in unaware of what's going on...

As for the "evidence" of the Holy Spirit in a person's life. Jesus said, **"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."**<sup>2</sup> Paul told the Galatians, **"But the fruit (evidence) of the Spirit is love,"**<sup>3</sup> he will expound on this in our next Ch. Here (Ch 12) we're learning that if the Holy Spirit is operating in your life, He will be made manifest in these gifts that will lead to the edification & encouragement of the church... I can't find it anywhere that makes it clear that what happens when the Holy Spirit fills you is that you speak in tongues. Did that happen in the book of Acts? Sometimes, not every time...

As for the interpretation of tongues. The key word is "interpretation". Not a word for word *translation*. But an *interpretation*. It's the gift that allows tongues to be of benefit for those other than the speaker. But the interpretation gives the essence of the meaning.

Remember back in Daniel Ch 5? Belshazzar was partying w/the vessels from the temple of God (that had been stolen from Jerusalem) & a hand showed up in the middle of all of it & began to write on the wall. **There were only 4 words etched on the wall, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin". No one knew what it meant, but everyone was freaking out...** Ultimately, they called for Daniel & Daniel gave them the interpretation. It wasn't a 4-word *translation* or *transliteration* but an *interpretation*. He told the king, **"This is the interpretation of each word. Mene: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; Tekel: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; Peres: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."**<sup>4</sup> But apart from an interpreter, Paul will tell us later, that this gift is to be kept between you & God. When you're alone, it's great, edify *your* spirit. When we're gathered collectively, let's look to be a blessing to others.

But evidently, the tendency w/in the Corinthian Christians was to divide or place certain gifts in certain categories of elevation.

<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Ac 1:8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Ga 5:22]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Da 5:26-28]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

If you could speak in a different language through the supernatural ability of the Holy Spirit, man you were really something. But those “prophesiers”, anyone can communicate in their own language...

But Paul is saying, “Look, the gifts of the Spirit shouldn’t lead to division & separation, but edification. It’s the same Spirit who’s sovereignly gifting each individual in the body. Therefore, they should build a greater *unity*.”

& Listen, don’t assume a greater spiritual maturity on the basis of one gift over the other. As though the person who prophesies must be especially close to God or really mature spiritually. Again, they’re “gifts” of the Spirit, not the “rewards based on merit” of the Spirit. The Corinthians were radically gifted but incredibly spiritually *immature*... This is why when you read of the criteria for positions of leadership among Christians, spiritual giftedness isn’t one of them. Because God can grant a gift in a moment’s time, but Christian character & spiritual maturity can take *years* to build... Spiritual gifts don’t highlight the greatness of man, but the graciousness of God... & They’re to be used (Vs 7) to bless, build up & benefit the church.

#### Vs 12-14

Diversity in the body of Christ isn’t to lead to division, it’s to facilitate harmony & unity. Differences of giftings aren’t to divide us, they’re to unite us.

Paul says, “Just like your body, your human body. It’s composed of *many parts, many members*, there’s a necessary diversity but the entire body works together in perfect unity. If it doesn’t there’s something out of order, so we go see the Dr. ... & There’s a mutual dependency amongst the various members of your body. Each member has a role it’s assigned, a responsibility to fulfill & the rest of your body is counting on that member so that everything functions properly. So to w/the body of Christ.”

In the book of Romans, he wrote it like this, “*For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.*”<sup>5</sup>Unity in diversity.

Your hand doesn’t have the same function as your foot, as your eye, as your ear, as your leg, as your liver or kidneys... you get the idea. But each member is needed & necessary if the body is to function effectively as intended.

Paul is saying, “That’s how the ‘body of Christ’ is.” Listen, being the *body* of Christ isn’t a “goal” to be achieved. It’s simply a reality (a fact) to be recognized...

<sup>5</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ro 12:4-5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now, some church bodies are comatose. No one is doing anything, they're simply unresponsive to the stimuli of the Holy Spirit. Or maybe *some* members are functioning, but *many* are dormant, unfeeling, they just aren't obeying the unction of the Spirit to serve or bless the body in any way. & It makes for a difficult process on the other members of the body having to adopt & learn to function apart from the other members of the body who simply don't function as they're intended to function...

Other church bodies appear to be epileptic. They're jerking & spasming all out of control. We want to be that body that's firing on all cylinders, moving forward, getting things done, building up & blessing one another for the glory of God.

But we're one body. We're not different isolated groups. It doesn't matter where you've come from, where you've been, how old/young you may be. It doesn't matter your ethnicity, your social class (rich or poor). When you believe upon the Lord J.C. the Holy Spirit "baptizes" (immerses) you into the body of Christ & that's it! We're either *in* Christ (& as such, His body) or we're *not*. There aren't "bodies" of Christ. There's only 1 body & every believer is an individual member that makes up the whole... & each member impacts the other (for better or worse).

Just like your body. Over the next 24 hrs. your heart will beat over 100,000 times. You'll take about 20,000 breaths; you'll speak about 7,000 words (give or take). & Every control system (nervous system, muscular system, digestive system, cardiovascular system etc.) will impact & effect the whole. The members of your body interact & affect one another. Sweat glands, brain cells, sensory glands (taste & smell), on & on you could go about the intricate innerworkings of the human body... Yet it all works in perfect harmony... (What a marvel of evolution... 😊 Not!)

Think of the design of a car, or your phone. How complex it is (each detail designed). It's nothing compared to the intricate complexity & diversity needing to function in perfect harmony known as the human body. Listen, design screams *DESIGNER!*

& God has designed the church like a body. Diversity, complexity, different roles & responsibilities. But we each share the same Life (belonging to the same Lord) & absolute unity of each member individually.

**Vs 15-20**

Paul is going to touch on a couple of different topics in this passage. The 1<sup>st</sup> being a sense of isolation that can lead to separation. The feeling of insignificance. You know, you walk in the church. Or maybe you've come here for a while & you look around & think...

“Man, I’m not really like anyone here. There are no ‘groups’ for me. I dunno, maybe I don’t belong here...” Wait, wait, wait! – Listen, the enemy wants you to think that you’re the odd duck, the odd man out. Not like the other kids so you don’t belong. He wants to isolate you in the fact that you may be different than the others around you. *So you adopt this mentality, “I’m not like these people, I guess I don’t belong in this group...”* It’s like the foot saying that because it’s not a hand, it’s not really a part of the body, can you see that? But hold up just a second. It’s precisely *because you’re not like us that you do belong w/us. If we were all the same, that would be a bit concerning.*

That’s what Paul is talking about when he says, “If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing?” How weird would it be to see a giant eyeball, just rolling down the street? That’s not right. It’s not how things should be. We need the diversity to create the beautifully balanced unity of the body.

*There is no one who is insignificant in the body of Christ. If you don’t appreciate the gifts you have, or where you’ve been placed... You need to take that up w/your Designer, your Creator. Because (Vs 18) “God has set the members each one of them in the body just as He pleased.” Did you catch that?* When you’re not comparing, complaining about or contrasting yourself w/other members of the body, but you’re simply/faithfully fulfilling your role – the Lord is pleased! & That’s why we were created! To have fellowship w/& bring pleasure to God, to glorify Him. Philippians 2:13, *“...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”*<sup>6</sup>

*We have a tendency to magnify “sensational” gifts. They must be more important, there they are all up in the limelight & all... wow, they must be really important. That’s the mentality that Paul is refuting here. Diversity doesn’t suggest inferiority... Did God make a mistake placing you where He chose to in the body? If it weren’t for the more “behind the scenes” members of the body, there would be no ministry of the “out front” operations.*

Think about it. What if some member of my body just decided it no longer wanted to function for the rest of my body. My heart decides it’s not going to fulfill its calling, or my liver, my kidneys, or my left leg for that matter, it would be downright detrimental, if not deadly the whole body! The point is that we’re given different gifts to bless & build up the body of Christ, your bro’s & sisters. We need one another to function effectively, in harmony, bringing God glory & increasing His kingdom.

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Php 2:13]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

There are a handful people who pray for this church every Sunday morning before you get here. People who gather every Tuesday evening for prayer... You never see them. Are they insignificant? Absolutely not! They're the lifeblood of this ministry! We couldn't function apart from them! **People who clean this place so you can be blessed, or mow the grass so you & your children can enjoy the property. Do they not matter? They bless everyone in this church family & beyond who come up here all the time throughout the week! People who manage the books, administrators... Listen, which one do we not need?**

So, not only is diversity acceptable, its essential! The body needs different parts, different roles, different responsibilities, or it's not a body. It doesn't function effectively.

The fact that you're different helps define your place. Don't try to be like anyone else, flourish in the place God has given you. Let's not jockey for what we believe to be the best positions but just to be submitted to the sovereignty of God & serve Him to the best of our ability for the sake of His glory. Let Him set us in the body as *He* deems best.

### **Vs 21-26**

**Same sort of principle from another perspective. Not only is it right to isolate & separate yourself because you're not like someone else. It's not right to exclude someone because they don't share in the same giftings you have. WE NEED ONE ANOTHER.**

It's easy for an evangelist to think, "If you're not going to get out there & win souls, then what good are you! Just move on!" Or those w/administrative gifts to think, "If you can't pick up after yourself, then don't come around!" They like everything orderly & in its proper place. But people start thinking they can do better w/out others. Again, the truth is we can't function at all w/out others.

**Look at it like this. Can the body function w/out a heart? No. Yet equally true is that a heart will cease to function apart from its body. As will the brain, or the stomach or an arm or an ear... There's mutual dependency w/in a body & each member individually serves the whole body collectively.**

Someone w/a tremendous gift of teaching or exhortation, prophecy/wisdom... All the things that the body needs in order to grow or mature & move forward in their walk w/Christ... Take them out of the body, isolate them so that they can't function in the corporate assembly & they become essentially useless. What benefit are they to anybody (spiritually). People need teachers & teachers need people, there's mutual dependency. & Such is the nature of every gifting. They're given for the profit/benefit of *others*...

So, these presentable parts. Eyes, ears, hands, feet. They get all the recognition.

When is the last time you really honored your small intestine? You thought about it, was careful to draw attention to it? Yet your whole body will come to a screaming halt if it fails to function as it was designed to...

You don't stop to realize how critical your molars are until you have a raging, insatiable tooth ache. Or a migraine. You don't go for a jog, despite your splitting headache. Your whole body waits on it to resolve. Your legs feel great, but you aren't going anywhere... These areas that seem less honorable (stomach, liver etc) are more essential than we stop to appreciate or realize...

& When we get to heaven, I think we'll all be in for a real surprise. We think we'll see all the pastors & evangelists (worship leaders) up front in the award ceremony... Probably not. People of prayer, behind the scenes servants, givers... those "hidden parts" of the body, God will honor...

& This is why we care for one another, because we're all part of the same body & God has in His infinite wisdom honored each one equally. Why then should we divide & create hierarchies? We're to work together, serve one another. It's interesting. The bible says, *"If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."*<sup>7</sup> Yet how many people come to church, feast in abundance upon the word of God, but not put in any work toward blessing the body of Christ nor the increase of His kingdom?

Now; there are those who serve the Lord in different ways I get that. You're out there serving perhaps at a homeless shelter. You're counseling people, you're discipling others outside these walls & when you come here you just need to sit & soak in the renewing waters of the word of God... That's great. But most of us should be serving, engaged in blessing/building up the corporate gathering in some capacity.

### Vs 27-31

We'll spend a little time on these Vs in our next gathering as we segue into Ch 13. For now, remember this: love one another, serve one another, care for one another, honor one another & God will be glorified in your life.

### Prayer Points:

Father thank You for Your love. We recognize Your wisdom in designing the roles & responsibilities in the body of Christ that each will be honored equally as we function faithfully in the capacity to which You've called us. May CCJ come alive in You, revive us, refresh us & be glorified in us.

<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Th 3:10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



We've talked a lot about responsibilities *to* the body of Christ, but before that God would have you be *in* the body of Christ. Baptized by the Spirit into the body. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved. For w/the heart one believes unto righteousness & w/the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Make your heart Christ's home today.