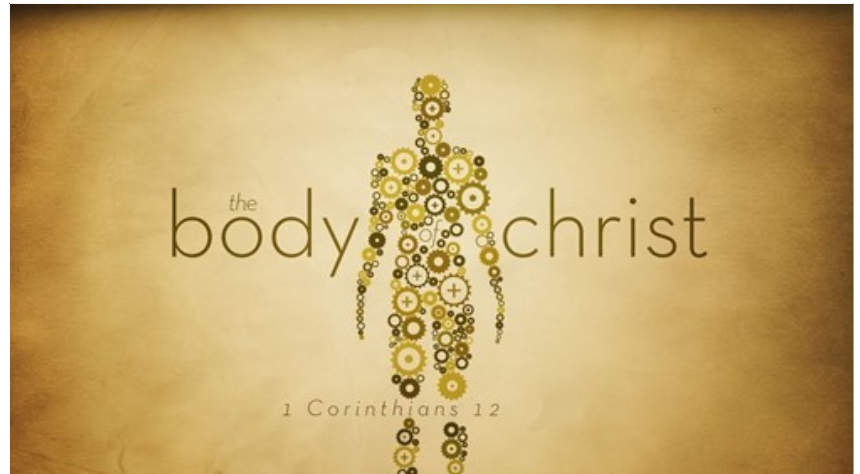


“The Body Christ”

- 1 Corinthians 12 -

by Pastor Tim Dodson
at JF Believers Church
in Menomonie, Wisc
on June 20, 2021



1 Corinthians 12 - *1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:*

2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away

to these dumb idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. 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: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 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. 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

Paul continues to drive home this critical aspect of unity in the body of Christ. One of the greatest ways in which we can act and be in unity is through the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit that are bestowed upon every individual believer. One of the greatest ways in which we can cause division in a church is through the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit that are bestowed upon every individual believer. It clearly comes down to just *how* that “exercise” is enacted and the heart behind their use. We tend to be consumed by the *doing* and loose sight of the *being*. Matthew 7:20-21 speaks of such saying “*Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you’...*”

In this area, the church in Corinth...*as well as so very many modern churches in our day*, have much to learn. There must be a clear understanding that the spiritual gifts God gives are not for individual glory or personal honor, but for the building up of the church as a whole. They are to be the *service of the one* for the blessing of the many...for the “building up” of the whole. Any gift that fails in this dynamic is either not a real spiritual gift at all, or at best it is misappropriated and falsely used, and therefore worthless to the body and worthless to God.

12:1 Paul begins this subject with the desire that the recipients of this letter would not be ignorant or not misunderstand what this issue of gifts is all about. It seems today that I should be as equally concerned in any such study environment. Because in our day, any foray into this issue could easily begin with those same words. It is a fact that few scriptural aspects has caused more confusion and division than the issue of spiritual gifts. Not because the bible is particularly ambiguous or nebulous in this matter. It is in fact the abuse, legalism, elitism, self-centered and extreme practice of particular gifts. Actually, all of the use of such “service gifts” today tend to be lost in the quandary of modern self-indulgence, self-entitlement and personal importance, forgetting that the innate purpose and design of these gifts is to bless, magnify and strengthen the whole church body. God gives us these gifts for the good of *others*.

12:2 Paul reminds the Corinthian believers where they had come from. He reminds them of their past when, instead of serving the true and living God, they were carried away by “dumb idols.” The text says they were “**led**” by these idols. That’s what idols do... lead us both **to** things false and **away from** the true and living God and all of his manifests.

That is the way of Satan. He seeks to lead us both *away* from the service of the only true and living God and His church, and *toward* the distractions of false gods and empty Lords. This was not just a problem for Paul and Corinth, for these idols still exist today, and in an ever increasing plethora of manifestations. Indeed, they come in different forms, but they are still the same “dumb idols.” They come today wrapped in different skins, but they still deliver the same emptiness.

Isa 29:8 *It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams, And look—he eats; But he awakes, and his soul is still **empty**; Or as when a thirsty man dreams, And look—he drinks; But he awakes, and indeed he is faint, And his soul still craves:*

12:3 We know that on some level an individual’s faith begins with confession of the tongue. A person can generally tell where another stands spiritually by his or her speech. However, we must acknowledge that a person “speaks” his or her confession in ways other than just with their tongue. Our lives profess our allegiance clearly to the world around us. Our lives profess who and what is the most important to us. Our heart, and the manifestation of it, speak volumes as to whose side we are on and who we represent.

12:4-6 The word “gifts” in its original form is the word “charisma.” Charisma comes from a form of the word charis, or grace. That is a good place to start in this subject of spiritual gifts. All of what we read of in this chapter concerning gifting comes to us through God’s grace, His “free and undeserved favor.” That should put a clear foundation under this issue.

Paul writes of the many kinds of gifts, but reminds us of the unity...the one Spirit, that stands behind them all. There are different ways and ministries in which we are called to serve the body of Christ, but one Lord is over all of them. There are many different activities we can involve ourselves in, but it is the one God who works in all of them, and in all of us. The Greek word translated “activities” is energema, from which we get our word energize. Gifts are given by the Spirit (Romans 12). Ministries are opened by the Son (Ephesians 4). Everything is energized by the Father (1 Corinthians 12).

12:7 Again we are herein reminded of the source of our gifts as well as the power behind them. The purpose is clearly “**for the profit of all.**” The word “manifestation” means “*to make known.*” The knowledge, the understanding, the presentation of the Spirit is given not for the benefit and glory of one, but for the benefit of everyone in the body of Christ.

12:8 **The word of wisdom:** This is the spiritual gift of speaking with divine insight to solve difficult problems, to defend the faith, or resolve conflicts. Stephen possessed this gift of wisdom in that his adversaries “*were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.*” (Acts 6:10) This gift is commonly found in good and successful leaders.

The word of knowledge: This is the power to communicate information that has been revealed. This may be knowledge attained through divine supernatural communication or knowledge through personal experience.

12:9 **The gift of faith:** This is the ability to overcome adversity in pursuing the will of God and to do great works of God through such triumph. George Muller was such a gifted man. Without ever making his needs known to anyone but God he cared for 10,000 orphans over a period of 60 years.

The gifts of healings: This has to do with the miraculous power to heal diseases and health ailments. However, let us note that the emphasis is on the *results*, not on the process. This gift does not produce divine **healers**, but divine **healing**.

12:10 **Working of miracles:** This could include casting out demons, or other miraculous acts which defy earthly explanation.

The gift of prophecy: This involves a foretelling and often a *forth-telling* of God’s words and direction. Such a gift is common, if not mandatory, in a pastor-shepherd. Quite simply, it is the verbal expression of the mind of God. This does not include the speaking forth of extra-biblical doctrine or direction contrary to the Bible. The Word of God itself clearly prohibits this:

De 4:2 "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

De 12:32 "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."

Pr 30:6 "Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."

Rev 22:18 "If any man shall add unto (the prophecy of this book), God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."

Discerning of spirits: This describes the ability to detect whether a person is speaking through the Holy Spirit or by Satan. A person with this gift has special ability to discern if a man is an imposter and an opportunist. Peter, for example, was able to expose Simon as one who was poisoned by bitterness and in the bond of iniquity (Acts 8:20–23). This gift is in play in this church, and we generally know if a person comes in amongst us with a pure heart or if they have other objectives.

Gift of tongues: This is an ability to speak in a language unknown to that individual.

The interpretation of tongues: Coming along side the gift of tongues, this is the miraculous power to understand a language which the person has never known before and to translate the message into the local language. (More to come on this later in 1 Corinthians.)

12:11 The Corinthian believers had allowed their arrogance and pride to taint even the expression of their spiritual gifts. Ironically, the very thing that was designed to pull them together in unity had contributed to their state of corporate disarray.

These gifts that are presented herein are not earned, purchased, learned in a class or forced. They are given simply and sovereignty as God wills. Where are these gifts today? Do they still exist? Because, let's admit it, we are hard-pressed to see these gifts overtly present and in wide use today.

When the church was young and pure, it delighted God to bestow many gifts upon His children to build each other and the church up. As time went on though, the church began to drift away from its pure and simple state. Strife, ego, division, worldliness, and carnality crept in.

We righteously must consider whether God still delights in lavishing these gifts upon a wider church that has so often left its corporate directive. The greater church today seldom prioritizes the unity and dynamic of the local assembly and now prioritizes secondary issues like multimillion dollar buildings, comfortable seating, state-of-the-art child care, rock concert worship, an encouraging positive pulpit message, etc. We come to church to *be* served, not *to* serve. Therefore, it appears that today He is more individually selective (at least in this country). Not that He doesn't *desire* to "pour out" his gifts on the church, but frankly so many who go to a church don't *really want* these gifts! This has happened and will continue to happen when we fail to abide by the cardinal directive of God to "love one another." As long as we make personal, individual and emotional demands upon the church and each other. We will never see this kind of moving of the Spirit of God as long as we allow life distractions and worldly idols to take the seat of authority in our lives. We fail the system when we do not give Him the glory for and power over our gifts and when we fail to use them for the profit of all.

12:12 One of the greatest truths that Paul left us in scripture was that of the mystical body of Christ being found in the form of the church. The body of the church itself is identified as Christ. Thus we partake of and embody the perfect righteousness of Christ when we participate in the righteous unity of the physical church.

God saves people by placing them "into Christ," identifying them "as Christ," and making them, in fact, to "be Christ." That doesn't mean we are somehow deity nor is it meant to take away from the unique expression of God the Father in the person of Christ. However, in such lies the daunting and magnificent mystery made real in our interaction with one another.

This verse...*if not this whole chapter*, describes the pinnacle purpose of the church. This is an undeniable description of God's place and purpose for the church. Once again, this is a truth that has fallen into a state of disrepute and has, in many circles, gained an archaic reputation.

We have adopted all sorts of stand-ins today for this God-ordained body of Christ. We have entertainment churches with Hollywood shepherds. We have home churches without any shepherds. We have isolation churches with self-appointed shepherds. We have mega-churches with famous shepherds. There are few today, though, that are the body of Christ with anointed under-shepherds. After all, pastors are to be more of a sheep-dog than a shepherd, keeping the flock together the best we can for the one and only grand shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Paul began this letter back in chapter one with a rebuke. The church in Corinth had allowed carnal divisions to come into their midst, and had wholly departed from the unity God prescribed for His church. The local church fellowship was given an innate characteristic as the "body of Christ." As a body, we can exude health or sickness.

Unity is where all the parts work together in symphony. Disease is where one or more parts turn against the rest of the body. Left untreated, this will ultimately result in the death of the body. A 'body of Christ' church, when

healthy, is the vehicle on earth by which God chooses to make Himself known to the world. If it's not healthy, we are in a world of danger. It obviously doesn't take a doctor to see that the rest of the world is certainly sick and dying. To even allow us to take upon ourselves the name of Christ most holy is evidence of the wonderful grace He has bestowed.

We are all different parts of the body, but we all still participate in the whole. Together, we are the earthly manifestation of Christ. Separate or in any way apart from one another, we cease to be a body and instead become dismembered and unable to function as we should, *as we must*.

12:13 It is by one Spirit we are baptized together. We each are individually saved to a personal relationship with Christ, yet redeemed to take our place in the greater body. No matter who and what we are or have been, we all drink from the same cup. We all have been made to drink from that cup. It's not an option.

Many have used terminology such as Lordship Theology and the like to infer that you must make Christ Lord of your life in order to be a true Christian. Whatever you may call it, this passage seems to help support this as a truth. Those who reject this doctrine feel that it takes away from the simple gift of salvation. However the rejection of Christ as Lord places us in a precarious position where we may only be proving that we did not receive Christ. Salvation is innately the surrender of control of our life and in the receiving of the cross to our account, we take up our cross of death and live a new life, one that is the life of Christ.

Christ tells us that we must be born of "water and spirit." (John 3:5) Peter joined in on this at Pentecost by issuing the command that all people should repent and be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Thus there are two essential baptism elements of our new birth: The baptism of water, the dying to this life and the rebirth unto the new. The baptism of the Spirit, the infilling and control of the Spirit of God.

12:14 Again we are reminded that we are in this together. We drank from the same Spirit (as we must). Not only is it a truth that all of us individually make up the whole, but each of us is necessary to make up that whole.

12:15-17 Each role, and its active participation within the body is crucial to the health and success of the whole. No one is more important than another, and none are without importance to the whole. The mouth may feel he is important, but without a hand a foot, or the rest of the body, he is just a "talking head" and no one is listening. What good is hearing if there are no body parts to act accordingly? Where would one foot go? It is easy to feel that the parts of the church body that are readily seen, or those that get man's accolades are the important ones, the gifts and roles to seek after. But each of us will fail in our attempts to perform any other roles other than the one the Holy Spirit is behind. Also it's important to remember the fact that we would ultimately never find joy in any other role.

12:18 Where we are in this body, or where we *are to be*, is as God has designed. Many have rejected this design and forced their way into a role within the body, and now resemble a nose glued to someone's forehead. They are conspicuous and unsightly, not to mention useless. They have "climbed into the sheepfold...like a thief or a rob-ber." (John 10) It is sad to watch such an individual. In an attempt to receive the accolades of men instead of the blessings of God, they never know success or the joy that accompanies a blessed position in the body of Christ. GOD places us in the body as He sees fit. Each of us were born for the role which we are to play.

12:19-21 There are no freelance Christians. We need each other. You may be an important man. You may be a judge, a congressman, or even a president. But you still need a simple farmer if you want to eat. Every role in the church body is important. And every role is Christ, the body and the glory of Jesus Christ.

John 17: 20-21 "*I ... pray... that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*"

12:22-24 There are many areas of ministry that seem to be more important than others, just as there are parts of the body that seem to be more important than others. However all parts are important if we are to be healthy and operate with a flow and success. Some of our "parts" are "out there" for all to see. They may get all of the glory, but I bet you have some body parts no one sees that you feel are pretty important, and which you would not like to do without! God put the human body together in a miracle of harmony and unity. So has He placed us all in the body of Christ, each playing our God-ordained role for the glory of Christ, and, in a body-life way, we are that earthly Christ.

Eisenhower reprimanded a general in the army for speaking of a soldier as "just a private," adding, "The private is the man who wins the war." This is exactly what Paul was saying here.

12:25-26 We seem to always find this truth the hard way. We can strut about like we are the important part of the body, failing to understand that unless everyone is fulfilling their part, nobody will be able to play their part. It is not just a matter of putting up with each other, but caring for each other. We are to laugh together, cry together, share each other's joys, and share in each other's pains. This is just like how the body itself feels the joys and pains of any one part of its body.

Ro 12:15 "*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*"

12:27-28 Paul again lists out some of those "body parts." Again, not an exhaustive list, not doubt. However, these are critical parts of the body for sure.

12:29-30 Here lies the crucible on the continuous debate on whether all must speak in tongues, or that tongues is a "gateway" gift to all the others. This passage is clearly, without possible debate, telling us that all do not speak in tongues. The answer to Paul's rhetorical questions is an overt "no." It is a gift. It's one of many, and is given as God so wills.

12:31 We are to seek the "*best gifts.*" What are these? The most visible? The most praised? No. The best gift is the one that is most needed in the body of Christ. The best gift is the one God has for you. Paul has not just taught these believers how to go about this issue, he shows them through the example of his own life. After all, Paul's role in the body was not sought by Him in any way. God chose him, called him, gifted him, and empowered him. It was all God's idea. It was Paul's job to simply obey.