

One Body, Many Members (2)

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[0:00] Our sermon this morning is actually going to be in 1 Corinthians, our New Testament reading. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, from verse 12 to 27.

And I believe that is on page 1139 in your pew Bible.

Now, it is God's preordaining sovereign will that this should be our reading on this Sunday, as we gather after the service for our annual meeting.

I wasn't planning on preaching on this text, but when I saw it in the elections for this Sunday, I thought, well, this is the Holy Spirit's work. And so this passage is very familiar to many of us, the passage about one body, many members.

But it is something that we ought to continue to remind ourselves of. Paul writes to the Corinthian church, reminding them of this truth.

[1:12] And as we ourselves go through this, we ought to think about the particular problem in the Corinthian church that caused Paul to write this.

The Corinthian church is the church of Christ. They were believers. They were saints in Christ. Everyone knows, if you read the New Testament, the Corinthian church seems to be the problematic church.

Paul has to write a lot to that church over against any other letters he wrote. But that's not to make us believe that, you know, they're believers. They're Christians like us, like you and I.

Paul refers to them as saints. He wouldn't have said that if they were not people that believed in Jesus Christ. Blood-bought saints. So he's writing to Christians.

And so we ought to remind us, even as we ourselves go through this, this letter is for believers. Not only that, though, there's a particular problem in the Corinthian church of self-focus, pride.

[2:10] They have the spirit among them. In fact, they exhibit the gifts of the Holy Spirit in various ways. But the way they were using the gifts that God has given them were problematic.

And God, and Paul, the Holy Spirit, true Paul, is trying to remind them of why the gifts were given, and for what purpose it was given, and for what aim the gifts are to be used for.

And that's what Paul actually talks about first in the first half of this chapter, verse 1 to 11. Talking about the different gifts and the focus of it. And he goes on in the latter part of this chapter to talk about the diversity that is in the body of Christ.

He takes it as a given. If you notice, that they are the body of Christ. That they are the church of Christ. It's a given. Not because of what they have done.

We talked about it when we went through Ephesians. The fact that we are the body of Christ is not, if I had to choose who would be the body of Christ, and it was left to me, I would choose people that have my interests, my, you know, people that love, you know, soccer, you know.

[3:23] And they call it football instead of soccer, the right way, the way it should be pronounced. Things like that. We all know that, you know, we would glamour among people.

That's just a natural, it's not that I'm saying it's a natural human thing. You flock around people that have the same interests as you. So if we had to decide who would make the body of Christ, we might all be clones of one another.

But that's not what Paul is saying. The body of Christ is the body of Christ because of what Jesus Christ himself has done to unite them. That we should keep in the background of our mind as we go through this text.

We are the body of Christ because of what Christ has done to unite us. We are blood-bought, all right? Sinners covered in Christ's righteousness, now called saints in Christ Jesus.

That is what Christ has done. And we are now come together with our different backgrounds, with our different histories, with our different interests, brought together into this body.

[4:23] There's a diversity. And even Paul goes further and says, even not only are there diversity of backgrounds, diversity of ethnicities, diversity of social backgrounds and social statuses.

There's also diversity of gifts within the church. But he wants to accentuate that diversity in unity. The agent of our unity, as we go through this, you'll see, is the Holy Spirit.

It's the Holy Spirit that brings us together. It is true because when you became a Christian, you became in Christ. You've been initiated into Christ by the Holy Spirit.

That makes you part of the body of Christ. This is why it's almost, it's an oxymoron to say that you're a lone Christian. And I think there are people out there that do believe that.

Perhaps because they've been burned by the church, because they've been hurt. Maybe it's because they are just not willing to obey and live in obedience and be corrected and live in accountability. But there are people that believe, oh, I believe in Jesus Christ, but I don't believe, you know, in the church.

[5:31] There's no such thing. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you've come to faith in him, you are a part of the body of Christ. Paul is not saying that you become a part of the body of Christ when you join a church.

He says if you're in Christ, you're part of the body. Now, he's writing specifically to a local body of believers. So, as we think about this text, I want us to think about the church of the Holy Trinity as uniquely the body of Christ.

We, this local body, is the body of Christ. Now, there are different local iterations of the body of Christ. And we're all part of the church universal.

But this letter, and all of 1 Corinthians, wouldn't make sense if Paul was writing to the universal body of Christ. Do you understand what I mean? Because this letter has to do with you.

We'll have relationship with one another. We'll live in proximity with one another. We'll interact with one another. We'll share life with one another. That's what the local body is. Every single church is a local body of Christ.

[6:40] And back then in the first century, it would have been very common that they only had one church in Corinth. Unlike now when, you know, there's different churches.

That's not a bad thing. But there are different churches. And we have the luxury of saying, oh, well, I'm going to leave that church to go to that church. That is not a luxury that the Corinthians had in their day.

So, let's look in the text. Let's see what Paul says. It's really in the first three verses. He says to them, Baptized in one spirit.

Drink of one spirit. That's what Paul says in this text. Right? He says, Just as the body is one and has many members. All the members of the body.

Though many in one body. So it is with Christ. That language there, it seems curious. It says, so it is with Christ. It's kind of like a metonym. So, he says, Just as the body is one and has many members.

[7:53] So it is with Christ. What he's actually saying is, So it is with the church. Christ is synonymous in this context with the body.

Because Christ is the head of the body. So what Paul is actually saying is, So it is with Christ's body. The church. Just as the body is one and has many members.

The church of Christ is also one body with many members. And how is it that we are many members? Because we were all baptized into one body.

We drink of one spirit. But what he's saying here, He's actually not talking about baptism. But he's not talking about what some have come to understand as a second baptism in the Holy Spirit.

He's talking about the initial occurrence of what happens when you come to faith in Jesus Christ. We all have one spirit.

[8:49] That is the Holy Spirit. This is an initial occurrence. If you come to faith in Jesus Christ, The very fact that you are in Christ means you've been given. In fact, the word here is flooded with the Holy Spirit.

Right? That is an initial. There's no such thing in this context. He's not talking about a second baptism. He's saying, If you're part of the body, You have the Holy Spirit. That's why you're part of the body.

And then his aim is to champion the diversity in that body. From verse 14 to 20, Paul talks about the diversity. He talks again, And it's often easy here to think about, You know, It's a natural inclination.

I've said it already. It's a natural inclination to look for uniformity. Uniformity is not the same thing as unity. I'm going to repeat that.

Uniformity is not the same as unity. We mistake uniformity for unity. Uniformity is, Oh, we all think alike. We all have the same point of view. We all are the same social economic bracket.

[9:57] We all are the same ethnic group. That's uniformity. That's not bad in and of itself. But it's not unity. Uniformity. And that's not what Paul is saying here. And we often, We tend to, All of us, I'm not excluded, We tend to look for uniformity.

But not so with the body of Christ. It's diverse. But it is unified. The unity of the body of Christ is that we are all in Christ. Christ is what unites us.

Do you see the difference there? And so, Paul goes on in verse 14 to 20 And talks about this diversity in the body. And he uses the analogy of the body. And I want to also make a distinction.

As we go through this, There's also a difference between Analogy and allegory. So as we go through this, You might tend to think of yourself, Well, I must be the harm. As you go through this, Don't allegorize this And place yourself in the, What you might be.

But Paul's point in using this as an analogy is to say, This paints a picture of the whole. But we can fall into the false trap of saying, You know, Apportioning yourself.

[11:05] Or you might say, Well, I'm probably just a toenail. I don't, I don't, I don't do, I don't do much. That, That, I don't want you, I mean, Naturally, You might think that, In one way or the other.

And I actually want to speak to those who think, Oh, I am, I'm the neck. Or I am, Well, Obviously, Christ is the head. So, You know, None of us, I hope, Would not say, I'm the head.

But, Oh, I am the leg. I'm so important. And I don't have need for any of this work. This word is for you. If you don't, If you think you're part of an essential part of the body And you don't have no need for anyone else, This, What Paul is saying here, Is for you.

If you, And it's also for you if you think, Oh, I'm just a toenail. I'm, I'm an entity here. I, I don't really do anything. I don't have any gifts. I have nothing to offer. This word is for you as well.

You are part of the body. You are essential. There is no non-essential part of the body. Every, You know how the torture, You know why when they torture people, I mean, I've never seen it in real life. I've seen movies. They rip their toenails off.

[12:07] Right? Have you seen movies? I'm sorry to be, To be graphic. You've seen one of those like, You know, Like, You know, Movies where, You know, Part of the torture devices, They rip toenails off. Why is that? I mean, It's toenails after all.

It's not, It's not important. But do you know the pain that goes on when you do that? The whole body feels it. That, This is why the example that Paul uses is really vital.

There is no non-essential part of the body. Every part of the body is important. So let's look in verse 14 to 20. Paul says, This is real, Right?

We see the analogy. But of many. If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, That would not make it any less a part of the body.

And if the hear should say, Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, That would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, Where would the sense of hearing be?

[13:06] If the whole body weren't here, Where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God, Look here, As it is, Who arranged it? God arranged the members of, In the body, Each one of them, As he chose.

That's key. Who arranged each members of the body? God. Who gives the gifts, To each member of the body? God. And he does it, Sovereignly, As he chose.

And if all, Verse 19, Were a single member, Where will the body be? As it is, There are many parts, Yet one body. Look at the picture, That Paul paints there.

If the whole body were a single body part, It ceases. It ceases to be a body. If the whole body were a arm, Or a leg, It ceases to be a body.

Its function and effectiveness, Will be impaired. Furthermore, That's actually a picture of it. It will be the stuff of nightmares. Have you ever had a dream, And you're dreaming, And you just dream of like a giant hand, You know, Chasing your giant eye?

[14:19] That's a, It's nightmarish. Right? And that's, That's really what, The body of Christ would be, If it were just, One member.

Or if the body of Christ, Tries to just be, The leg. It will start being the body, And it will become a nightmare. So the diversity is essential, It's important, It's God given, It is part of the way the body works.

That is, That is an essential, Important quality to this. So Paul says, As it were, In reference to the, To the church, And to the body, As it were, You, There are many parts, Yet one body.

And he says, So this is, This is why, The, The eye, Or an eye, Cannot say, I do not belong to the body. If you're here, And you said, Well I don't, You know, I, I'm not, And this is, This is important, So this is an analogy, For gifts in the church.

So if you, I don't know, In the Corinthian church, The gifts that they, Elevated above, All other gifts, Paul talks about in the first half, Of this chapter, Is the speaking in tongues, Right?

[15 : 34] And you, You find that even in some churches today, They elevate the gift of speaking in tongues, As a sign, That you're a mature Christian, That you are a more mature Christian, And if you don't speak in tongues, Then you actually, Maybe you're not even a Christian, Maybe you don't actually know Christ fully.

Paul is saying, There is no such thing there, Right? It's, It's a gift that is given by God, Sovereignly, As he chose, It doesn't make you more spiritual, Than your brother that doesn't have that gift.

Maybe in this church, The gift is being a good teacher, Being able to teach, Right? Maybe is, And by the way, When Paul lists the gifts, He lists it, From speaking in tongues, And, And, And, And interpreters, To administrative skills.

He says, Those are all gifts given to the church. Maybe your gift is, To be as a leader, As an administrator, Maybe your gift is, To be a, A mercy ministry, To care, To hospitality, All of those things, Paul says, Are essential.

But if you particularly have one gift, And you say, Well, My gift is just to, Hospitality, And I, I don't have the, I, I don't have the gifts like, You know, Brother Smith, Who's a great teacher, Or, Or, Mrs. Smith, Who's, Who's just, A map, She can just read the Bible, And understand it very well, That's a gift that I don't have.

[16 : 54] So that makes, I'm not part of the body. Paul is saying to you, That doesn't mean that you're not, You don't stop being the part of the body, Because you feel, Less than, You are, Because you are in Christ.

But he goes on, In the latter part of this, And says, To those who think, Oh, Well, You know, I'm, I'm a great teacher, Or in the Corinthians, I can speak in tongues, And, You know, All the day long, Or, You know, I am just, I'm just a mature believer, You know, He's saying to them, In verse 21, That I cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, If that's you, You know, I, You know, I, I am a well-oiled, Christian machine, Um, I don't need, I don't, I come here, But I don't really need you, In fact, You need me, I don't need you, Paul is saying here, If that's you, On the contrary, Paul says in verse 22, The parts of the body, That seem to be weaker, Are indispensable, And on those parts of the body, That we think less honorable, We bestow the greater honor, And on presentable parts, Are treated with greater modesty,

Paul is using the whole body here, As an example, And he's saying, You know, The weaker part of the body, He's talking about your organs, Your internal organs, Are the weaker part, Right?

So they're covered, And they're not exposed, Right? What happens when, An organ is impaired, It affects, It's actually a mortal, It could be a, You know, You can prick my hand, You can even cut off my finger, I will survive, You prick my organs, The weaker part, That could be a mortal wound, Paul is saying, Even those that we think are weaker, Are the ones that are indispensable, Part of the body, He's using this analogy, Right?

It's an analogy, And he goes on, He says, Even the part that we think less honorable, Now, He's talking here about, Our private parts, Right? And he's saying, Even those parts, Are the ones that we, Afford the greatest honor, We cover them up, We shield them, We treat them with greater modesty, Because there are, We afford them a greater honor, He's saying, There is no, And he's, There is no such thing, As an indispensable, Or, Unorable, A less presentable part of the body, All is essential, All is honorable, All is vital, In verse 24, It says, Which, Are more presentable, But he says in, End of verse 25, But God has so composed the body, Giving greater honor, To the part that lacked it, Paul is essentially, Paul is essentially saying, God, In his sovereign wisdom, Has given more honor, To those that seem,

[19 : 47] To lack the honor, In the body, And he says it, That there may be no division, In the body, This is why this is so, But that the members may have, This is the purpose, So that the members

may have, The same care for one another, What's the point of all, Him telling us, There is diversity, In the unity, Of the body of Christ, So that we may have, The same care for one another, If one member suffers, All suffer together, If one member is honored, All rejoice together, What does that look like, In the body of Christ, If one member suffers, All suffer together, If one rejoices, All rejoice together, I, I'm not trying to, Your own here, But I'm so grateful that, There's aspects of this, That are true in this church, I've seen you suffer, With one another, I've seen you rejoice, With one another, Praise be to God for that, We've suffered in the past months,

As a body of Christ, We've lost people, But praise be to God, That we carry one another's, Burdens in that regard, That is us reflecting, Truthfully, Really, That we are, A body, I use that analogy, Take, Don't do it, But, Imagine someone ripping, Your, Your, Your toe fingers off, And see if you don't suffer, You don't howl out in pain, Step on your child's toy, In the middle of the night, The Lego pin, On your heel, You, You will know, Your whole body will suffer, Right?

I'm not, I'm speaking from experience here, So, The whole body suffers, If one part is injured, Um, And Paul ends this, By saying, This analogy, This is you, Corinthian church, This is you, Church of the Holy Trinity, You are one body, With many members, Now you are the body, But not just any body, Verse 27, You are the body of Christ, Individually members, Individually, Members, Of the one body, Of Christ, What a great honor, To be part of the body of Christ, What a great privilege, That God, In his sovereignty, In his gracious mercy, Has called you from death, Into life, Giving you his Holy Spirit, And, Placed you, Into his body, I wonder if we see it as a privilege, We see it as a word, And, Oh man, Yeah, Those people, I've got to love them, I've got to deal with them, And that's a, Wait, Again, We're diverse, Aren't we?

We have different opinions, And different mindset, And different backgrounds, And that would be a, Part of that, Part of being the body, You have to deal with one another, That's what it means to be part of the body, But it is a privilege, Because it is the body of Christ, There is no other institution, No other entity, Like this, In the world, Because it's not because, Of our blood, Ethnicity, Paul has said it, Right?

[23:06] It is not because, You're Jew or Greek, Slave or free, In verse 13, That's not what makes you, The body of Christ, It's not ethnicity, Or social class, It's not man made, It is all because, You've been brought, Into that body, By the spirit of Christ, It is God, God initiated, God made, That's a privilege, That's an honor, We ought to see it, That way, So I want us to, Again, I want to remind you, This is a message for you, If you have, A tendency for self-pity, Or if you have a tendency, For self-sufficiency, Those two things, Might seem opposite, But they all stem, From the same thing, Pride, If the person, With self-pity, Was not proud, He would not care, That he does not have, The gifts that others have, You will be content, In the gifts, That God has given, By the way, Paul says, All of us have gifts,

It also says, That's a reality, If you're a member, Of the body, You've been given gifts, By the risen and ascended Lord, So don't compare your gifts, To that other person, Be faithful in the gifts, That God has given you, Use your gifts, Within the body of Christ, To, And that's, The reason God has given it to you, Is to edify, The body of Christ, We don't have gifts, For private use, If you're part of the body, Your gifts that God has given you, Is for, Not for you, It's for the body, Again, Going to the analogy of the body, If the arm says, Well, I'm not going to use my gifts, Of being able to move, From one place to the other, The legs, Sorry, From, Use my gifts, Of being able to move, From one place to the other, I'm not going to use my, Gift of being, Having, You know, Index fingers, And being able to grab things, For the body, Where would the body be?

If you can't move, And it's stationary, Right? If we are dormant, With the gifts that God has given us, You're injuring the body, And you're injuring yourself too, Because if the leg, Does not move from one place to the other, The body will feel it, And the body will be groaning, And eventually, The leg will feel it as well, But God has given us gifts, To be used for the edification of the body, So this is a message for you, If you have a tendency to self-pity, Or comparing your gifts to the other, The tendency is for you to be faithful, If this tendency is self-sufficiency, That you're the kind of person, That proudly believes, That does not need the gifts of others, In order to survive, And to thrive in the body, The tendency is for you to humble yourself, And see that you are part of the body of Christ, And you need your brothers and sisters, So there's a series of do's and don'ts here, And I just want to end here, As applications for us, I want to encourage you, Don't allow yourself, To indulge in self-pity, Right, Let's just say it, Don't compare yourself with one another, Or compare your gifts with one another, With others, But, As Paul says in Galatians 6, But let each one, Each

one of us, Test his own work, And then his reason to boast, Your reason to boast, Will be in himself, Alone, And not in his neighbor, This is in the context of, Of not looking around, And comparing, Your gifts to the other, Look at what God has been giving you, Be faithful steward, Of that, That God has given you, And by God's grace, The reason to boast, Will be in yourself, And your faithfulness, By the power of the Holy Spirit, To be faithful to what God has given you, Not, By looking around and seeing, You know, What your neighbor has done, Or what he's been given, Or she's been given,

Also, Don't allow yourself, To be prideful, By reveling in your gifts, For Paul tells us in Romans, For by grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, Not to think of himself, More highly than he ought, To think, But to think with sober judgment, Sober judgment, Think about yourself, With sober judgment, Each according to the measure of faith, God has assigned, Do we think, About ourselves with sober judgment, If we do, We'll realize, I'm a sinner, Saved by grace, God has given me gifts, Within the body of Christ, And I should, I should recognize, This is a gift from God, I have no reason, To pride myself, Or, Or, You know, Pride myself over, And against my brother in Christ, Because of what God has given me, It is a gift, And don't, Don't presume, That everyone should have, Your gifts, Or serve in the same capacity, As you do, We tend to do this, If I'm serving in this ministry,

[28:06] Or in particularly these gifts, I want to, I want to marshal the whole church, To do my ministry, But what happens if the whole church, Is involved in your ministry, What happens to the rest, Of the body of Christ, How will it thrive then, And don't think that your ministry, Or your gifts, Is the only thing, That makes the church run, And take, It's, Again, Your ministry, That's what we've been talking about, Your gifts, And your ministry, Is essential, To the well, Running of the body, But it is not, The only, Part that is essential, So don't presume, That everyone should have, Your gifts, Be thankful, That actually, Others have different gifts, For the well, Ordering, And functioning of the body, Those are the series of don'ts, These are things, We ought to do, As the body of Christ, As the body of Christ, Drink deep, Hear this, Drink deeply,

And often, Of the spirit, That is the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ himself, Says, If anyone is thirsty, Let him come to me, And drink, Whoever believes in me, As the scripture has said, Streams of living water, Will flow from within, This is, This is, John later, Goes on, In this same, In the same passage, That he's talking about, The Holy Spirit, This, Streams of living water, That will flow from within, This flooding, Of the Holy Spirit, Of God, In your life, As a believer, Is the whole gift of the Holy Spirit, That he's given you, So drink deeply of that, That's your source, Go back to it, Often, And drink of it, Your power, To work with it,