

Strive for Unity in the Local Church // 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

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[0:00] The letter of 1 Corinthians is a treasure. It contains more teaching on the resurrection, spiritual gifts, marriage, and the virtue of love than any other book in the Bible.

! But it is not cold theology. 1 Corinthians is an urgent call for us to remember the gospel. And as a result, it's a call for us to be a cross-centered, holy, and united people until He returns.

Listen in to what God has to say to us through this inspired letter. 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12 through 13. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Jews or Greeks, slaves were free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Mr. and Mrs. Parrish sat alert in the hospital room waiting for news about their child from the doctor.

[1:31] Finally, the doctor entered. He pulled up a chair and began to carefully explain. Mr. and Mrs. Parrish, this is not easy, but I need to inform you that your baby, your child, has a rare disorder called disintegrationitis.

What? What? What? What does it mean? Yes, the body, as you know, is supposed to work together as one integrated whole.

However, your child's body parts are all behaving completely independently, disintegrated. Unfortunately, there's either an overinflation or an underinflation of importance, and each part behaves as if it's on its own.

We've already seen manifestations of it. Sometimes the parts try to mimic others in hopes of being seen as more important, like the hand trying to talk like a mouth and eat things.

We've also seen some body parts attack other body parts. A few minutes ago, we monitored the elbow hitting the stomach and the knee smashing the face. Others are refusing to move.

[2:52] Other parts are staying completely still for fear of being attacked by the other body parts. We've seen this fear actually in the future lead to paralysis of the entire body.

And unfortunately, the feet are already fighting with each other. We've seen this lead to erratic walking in later years.

Often they'll try to go in two opposite directions, and as you might have guessed, this can be stretching for everyone involved. Sadly, disintegrationitis can lead to body splitting if left untreated. Disintegrationitis. It's not real, okay? In case you're wondering. It may not be a real diagnosis for the human body, but it is sadly a diagnosis that is all too common in the church body.

It's the case that we see in the Corinthian church. We have one-upmanship. We have disregard for others. We have an unclear purpose. We have chaos. All these things characterize the Corinthian church.

[4:03] They were not lacking in spiritual gifts. But the variety of gifts, granted, were not being used for the common good. So here, Paul introduces one of the most well-known metaphors for the people of God, members of one body.

Because it's well-known, we can kind of lose sight of the severity and even the absurdity of dysfunction, like I just described. And we forget how wonderful, how beautiful it is when the body is fully integrated, relying on one another and operating together.

This is a vision. This is a vision. It's a vision for those united together by the Spirit of God to battle independence, pride, self-pity, grumbling, and disunity.

It's a vision that moves us to greater unity, love, joy, and purpose. It drives us to thankfulness for the Spirit that made us into one body.

And it drives us to dependence on the Spirit who strengthens us for the good of the whole body. What is the remedy for disintegration, I ask?

[5:27] I think this is the main point for us today. Strive for unity in the local church through the Spirit who made us one.

We're going to break this into three points I trust reflect the Scripture. First is all the many members are one body. I mean, Paul just highlighted previously that varieties of gifts have been given from the same source for the common good.

And now Paul is driving home the point that in their diversity, they are united in Christ. He gives a theological basis for their unity in verses 12 to 13, using this familiar analogy of the body.

Verse 12, the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body.

So just as diverse members are unified in the body, so also are diverse Christians unified in the body of Christ. The picture of the body here is actually where Paul helps us understand the concept of membership.

[6:52] It's embedded in the language. Apart from this word picture, the meaning of the word member, I don't know about you, but for me, it can be misunderstood as if membership is paying to be a part of a club or an association or something like that.

But here, Paul is talking about a living, moving organism. The human body made up of limbs and organs.

When a body is dismembered, the various parts are cut off from one another. So to be membered together is for the diverse parts to be joined together in unity and in purpose, each subjecting themselves to a specific assignment for the good of the whole body.

I enjoy talking to folks who serve in the military. If I ask, what branch did you serve in?

I can get Army, Marines, all the various branches, Navy. But in all of my experience, asking that question, what branch did you serve in?

[8:01] I've never had someone reply to me, all of them. And none of them. I don't belong to any specific one.

I just support them all. What? What are you talking about? Well, wherever two or three gather in the name of the USA, there the military is in the midst of them.

Is that how that works? Who do you report to? Well, I report to the president. Everyone ultimately reports to the president, so I just report directly to him. What?

What's your mission here? Well, it's to defend the U.S. You know, it's like keep an eye on China, on Russia, the Taliban. What? I mean, that doesn't make sense.

It doesn't make sense. Their service in the overall mission of the military is expressed in a specific branch, under specific authority, with specific accountability, and a specific locale, a place.

[9:02] The solo soldier does not make sense as an expression in the military. The solo body part does not make sense as an expression in the church.

In an even greater way. Your service in the overall mission of the church finds expression in a specific local church, under specific authority, with a specific accountability.

Our membership in the body is to be lived out locally, in the context of real relationships, interconnected, under real authority, and trusted by the living God to pastors.

So the language of limbs and organs vitally working together in one body is vivid, and it's to be carried out in the local church.

And even this letter, if you look, it's addressed to a local church. The church at Corinth, a body. An expression of the church universal lived out locally.

[10:07] So if you look at our text, we have a very surprising conclusion to Paul's analogy. In verse 12. We might have expected Paul to complete the analogy in verse 12 by saying, so it is with the church.

Isn't that interesting? I mean, that language is so striking and it's sobering too, because he identifies the members of the church, not as this lateral thing going on over here, but directly with Christ himself.

That puts our relationships with Christ's body on a completely different plane. Our proud individualism, factionalism, they're not just horizontal sins against others.

They are offenses against Christ himself. Remember Paul's question earlier when addressing factions in chapter 1, verse 13. Is Christ divided?

So to sin against one another in the body is actually to sin against our Lord and Savior who holds us all together. Brothers and sisters, as a body, we must watch out for unforgiveness and apathy.

[11:38] Do you intentionally avoid someone when you come in to worship? Do you find the thought of working together or praying for the other person's good, do you find that unthinkable?

Have you stopped caring for other members of this body? Do you still weep with those who weep or rejoice with those who rejoice? Are you still engaging in others' pains and joys?

Do you know people? Are you known? I mean, can you imagine a human body becoming unforgiving or apathetic? If the hand touched a stove, wouldn't the rest of the body do everything in its mind to pull away the hand from danger?

Wouldn't the other members rush to care for the hand that's burned, to pull it close, to unite in such a way to treat the wound? For a physical body to remain unmoved would indicate there's dysfunction.

Something's wrong. How much more so with the body of Christ, with Trinity Grace Church, we are members of one body, one another.

[13:04] So let's live like that. Secondly, all were made one in the Spirit. Verse 13 begins with four.

This connecting phrase is important to the argument because spiritual gifts are a source of controversy and division in this body. But it is in one Spirit that all are baptized into the one body of Christ.

And it is one Spirit of which all are made to drink. Verse 13 shows the Spirit's work in every Christian produces an indivisible unity among them.

With that being Paul's point, it's actually very ironic that verse 13 has been the source of so much division. In one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body.

What is this describing? How can we understand baptism in the Holy Spirit? Now we are what's called continuationists.

[14:17] This is in contrast to the doctrinal position called cessationists, meaning that some of the gifts of the Spirit ceased at the end of the apostolic age or at the closing of the canon of Scripture.

We do not believe that the Bible gives warrant to hold that position. We will go into more details, just buckle up, in chapter 13.

But for now, we can say that we believe that the gifts will continue until Christ returns. That is why the position we hold is called continuationism.

Now within continuationism, there are essentially three major groups, and they relate to three waves of historical movements.

The first wave is the Pentecostal movement that began in the early 1900s. The revivals that occurred were compared to Acts 2 at Pentecost when Peter and the other apostles received the Holy Spirit.

[15:19] They were empowered for ministry, and then they spoke in tongues. A hallmark of Pentecostal belief is that the Christian is to experience a second baptism, a baptism in the Spirit that is initially evidenced by speaking in tongues.

Well, in this view, a person experiences conversion first, and then Spirit baptism second, which is signified by speaking in tongues. Classic Pentecostal traditions such as Assemblies of God and the Church of God of Cleveland would be associated with this view.

A second historical wave occurred in the 1970s with the Charismatic Revival. This is where Buddy and Judy come into play. As the U.S. engaged in the Vietnam War, people began to question everything.

Many began to find answers in the Bible. And hippies were getting saved. It was wonderful. Mainline churches were being revitalized.

A fresh awareness of and desire for the Spirit was pervasive. And with the revival, manifestations of the spiritual gifts were sought and experienced.

[16:36] It was in this context of revival that our family of churches was born. Now, broadly speaking, the Charismatic Revival emphasized a baptism in the Spirit as a second work of God after conversion.

And unlike the Pentecostal movement before it, there was not the same emphasis on speaking in tongues as the initial sign of being baptized in the Spirit.

And yet, both Pentecostal movement and the Charismatic Revival hold to what has been called a doctrine of subsequence. You hear in the language, subsequence.

That's a belief in initial conversion and then a subsequent or a second experience of further empowerment by being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Track it with me? Finally, a third wave of continuationists developed in the 80s. They've been cleverly labeled third wave.

[17:48] Isn't that fancy? The third wave folks agree that the gifts continue into the present age until Christ returns. However, they do not agree with the doctrine of subsequence.

In other words, they believe that there is not a subsequent baptism in the Holy Spirit separate from conversion. Instead, they believe that all Christians are baptized in the Holy Spirit at conversion. Verse 13 is a watershed text for how we understand baptism in the Spirit. So we can think through this issue of baptism in the Holy Spirit by asking two questions that we're going to navigate through. First is, what does the phrase baptism in the Holy Spirit mean in the New Testament? And the second question is, how should we understand the second experiences that we see that came to born-again believers in the book of Acts?

How are we supposed to understand those? So the first question, what does this mean in the New Testament? Well, there's seven texts. Seven texts specifically dealing with baptism in the Spirit.

[19:01] The first four come in each one of the Gospels where John the Baptist is speaking of Jesus and predicting that he will baptize people in or with the Holy Spirit.

So all those are in the Gospels. The next two passages refer directly to Pentecost in Acts 1 and Acts 11. So that's six of them right there. All six of these verses use almost exactly the same expression in Greek.

With the only difference being a little variation of word order or maybe a verb tense just to fit the sentence. The only remaining reference beyond those six is what we're looking at right here.

1 Corinthians 12. So in some English translations, 1 Corinthians 12, 13 looks like it may be different from these other six instances. Because, for instance, we'll use the NIV just as an example.

It translated this way. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body. Notice that the use of the word by one Spirit here instead of in one Spirit.

[20:12] In all the other six verses, Jesus is the one who baptizes people and the Holy Spirit is the element. So if you imagine like a physical baptism, Jesus baptizes you into the Holy Spirit like going under the water.

But according to some of these English translations, this verse seems to be showing something different. Because the person doing the baptism is not Jesus, but the Holy Spirit.

And so those who believe in a doctrine of subsequence are happy to have 1 Corinthians removed from this conversation. Why is that?

Because if we get to a place where we say that this verse is talking about baptism in the Spirit, like the other six verses, then Paul is saying that all the Corinthians were baptized in the Spirit when they were made into one body.

And if that's the case, then this baptism in the Spirit is talking about their conversion. Not a second experience.

[21:22] Not a subsequent experience. So if it's talking about the same thing as the other verses, then it actually undermines the teaching that baptism in the Spirit is a second experience that happens after conversion.

So the Greek word, it can legitimately be translated in, with, or by. Oh man! So translations like the NIV have opted for by.

But if you're reading this in the original language, it's actually the same language as the other six verses. The only minor difference is that he refers to one Spirit rather than Holy Spirit.

That's the only difference. So if that's the case, why do some translations use by instead of with or in? It seems like some translators wanted to avoid this appearance of having two locations for baptism.

in the same sentence. The sentence already says that this baptism was into one body. Maybe the translators thought it would seem weird to say in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.

[22:34] You see how it sounds kind of weird. But that shouldn't be a huge hurdle for us. Because Paul already said just a couple chapters earlier that we were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

You might think well which is it? Were they baptized into Moses, the cloud, or the sea? Well the point there is not that they were immersed into three different locations.

Moses, cloud, and sea. Instead the people of God found themselves located in the cloud and sea by being baptized immersed into the element of Moses' leadership.

The element. So in a similar way here the Holy Spirit was the element in which they were baptized and the body of Christ the church was the location in which they found themselves after the baptism.

Made alive into one body. Baptized into one body by the Spirit. So it seems appropriate to conclude that 1 Corinthians 12, 13 also refers to baptism in or with the Holy Spirit and is referring to the same thing as the other six that we mentioned.

[23 : 46] All the Corinthians were baptized in the Holy Spirit and the result was that they became members of the body of Christ. Baptism in the Holy Spirit therefore must refer to the activity of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Christian life.

When he gives us new spiritual life he cleanses us. He gives us a clear break with the power and love of sin. So what are we to make the second question of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in Acts where it seems like it comes as a second experience on those who were already believers like Peter for instance.

Would this not represent the doctrine of subsequence A Christian becoming Spirit empowered after a second experience? to answer that it's wise of us to note when these scriptures fall in the unfolding story of redemption.

The day of Pentecost was the point of transition between the old covenant and the new covenant work of the Holy Spirit. So it's true to say that the Holy Spirit was at work throughout the Old Testament but during that time the work of the Holy Spirit was in general a work of lesser power. The Old Testament people of God they looked forward eagerly to a new covenant age when the work of the Holy Spirit would be much more powerful and much more widespread.

[25 : 21] So the disciples they did not receive this full covenant empowering for ministry until the day of Pentecost. Wait until power from on high comes.

This was a transition point not only in the lives of the disciples like Peter but also in salvation history. So in many ways the book of Acts is an apologetic for the inclusivity of the people of God. It really is intended the whole thing it's intended to shock us by who is being saved into the family of Jesus Christ. Every few chapters it makes its readers want to say wait a second even those people too?

Really? Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come and make these scaredy cat disciples into his empowered witnesses in Jerusalem in Judea and Sumeria and to the ends of the earth.

And what is it that we see in the book of Acts? Chapters 2 to 7 the Holy Spirit is poured out where? In Jerusalem. That's where they are.

[26 : 39] And Jews from many different ethnic backgrounds trust in Christ they are united into one body. Wait a second even those people too? That's what it's intended to make us say?

Yes! And then you get to chapter 8 and we find Christians scattering into the surrounding countryside where? Judea and Samaria these half-breeds these religious outcasts and what happens?

They trust in Christ and they receive the Holy Spirit wait a second even these people too? Yes! Yes! Them too! And then from chapter 8 forward we see a traveling Ethiopian we see the murderous Saul we see more and more Gentiles an Italian soldier people from all nations trusting in Christ wait a second even those people too?

It's shocking it's shocking yes yes yes that's the declaration of Acts Acts is a vindication of Christ's promise to make disciples in Jerusalem Judea Samaria and to the ends of the earth and the presence of the Spirit was the seal it was the seal this was a turning point in salvation history they received this new power from the Holy Spirit because they were living at the time of transition between the old covenant work and the Holy Spirit and the new covenant work of the Holy Spirit so for the disciples it was a second experience of the Holy Spirit coming long after their conversion but it's not to be taken as a pattern for us because we're not living at a time of transition in the work of the Holy Spirit you and I don't first become believers with a weaker old covenant work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and then wait until sometime later to receive a new covenant work of the Holy Spirit we're not in that same marker and we don't first have faith in a Messiah that we are waiting for and then later learn that Jesus has come and lived and died and rose again that's not what we

experience we're in a different season we come into an understanding of the gospel of Christ immediately fully we are in the same position as those who became Christians in the church of Corinth when we become Christians we are all baptized into one spirit into one body just as the Corinthians were Wayne Grudem explained it this way he said baptism in the Holy Spirit is a phrase that the New Testament authors use to speak of coming into the new covenant power of the Holy Spirit it happened at Pentecost for the disciples but it happened at conversion for the Corinthians and for us and so we agree with the third wave position we do not believe that there is a historical or an exegetical warrant to expect a two step process of becoming a Christian and then receiving a subsequent baptism in the spirit we believe that the episodes in Acts are a description of a transition period in redemptive history not a prescription or pattern to be pursued in the fullness of the new covenant instead

[30:09] Acts should make us marvel at God fulfilling his promise to unite all kinds of people in the spirit at conversion and this is exactly Paul's point in this text to the Corinthians far from highlighting a second experience Paul is drawing their attention to the striking unity the spirit creates Jews or Greeks slaves or free wait a second even those people too yes yes yes these are completely different individuals found in a city now found together in the body who in our town would be a shock to see sitting next to you on a Sunday morning at community group around your dinner table who comes to mind is it someone recovering from addiction is it someone from the other side of the tracks the

Latino construction worker the Indian at the hotel or the gas station the Japanese who come for a season to work at Denso or maybe it's the transplant from California is it a single mom struggling to make it or a kid from a broken home is it the affluent business owner or the high school dropout maybe it's the Gen Z college student the athlete at T-Dub that has never been to church before what faces come to your mind that would be shocking to see paired with your name in this town wait a second even those people too yes yes yes we are all made one body in the spirit point three all are enlivened by the spirit not only are we baptized into one spirit into one body at conversion verse 13 also says that we all were made to drink of one spirit made to drink it actually carries this idea of being drenched or flooded back in the day you could go to Sea

World whenever I was a kid and you could sit near the tank where the dolphins and the whales jumped in what was called the splash zone and if you were sitting in the splash zone it didn't matter if you were young or old black or white the thing everyone had in common was that you were drenched by the end and it was an all consuming encounter it had this unifying effect too everyone would just be kind of looking around and stupefied wonder shocked overjoyed and drenched from head to toe unmistakably marked by the spirit and I don't mean just experiencing ecstatic experiences but has every aspect of your life been affected by the presence of the holy spirit that imagery of drenching is very provocative but the language it actually carries an even deeper meaning it literally means to give to drink or to water like a gardener pouring water on parched thirsty plants it's this picture of thirst being satisfied life being given being poured out it's intended to capture the outpouring of

God's spirit on his people and we see this command in Ephesians 5 it's given to the church in the new covenant those who are already new covenant believers those who are united in their conversion in the spirit this is the command do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery but be filled with the spirit be filled with the spirit this is not a call to act like a drunk person it's saying that like a drunk person is under the influence or the effect of alcohol so too should your life be under the influence of the holy spirit what does this look like our statement of faith explains it this way to be filled with the spirit is to be more fully under his influence more aware of his presence more effective in his service so the verb tense actually it communicates something like be continually being filled don't think of it like a cup that's like half empty you don't have all the spirit think of it more like a balloon that's already inflated it's full but it becomes fuller and fuller and fuller we're to long for more and more and more of the spirit so it's actually appropriate to understand filling with the spirit not as a one time event but as something that is continually and repeatedly happening to Christians to Christians repeatedly D.A. Carson says it this way although I find no biblical support for a second blessing theology I do find support for a second third fourth or fifth blessing theology I think it's extremely dangerous to pursue a second blessing attested by tongues I think it no less dangerous and this is what we need to hear it's no less dangerous not to pant for God at all to be satisfied with a merely creedal Christianity that is kosher but complacent orthodox but ossified

sound but soundly asleep may it never be said of Trinity Grace Church that we are soundly asleep when it comes to the spirit may we hunger and thirst and beg for more I want to be used by you Lord I know I'm not much but

[37 : 13] I'm here that's what we're calling out for our statement of faith wonderfully! captures this it says! all Christians therefore must continually seek to be filled with the spirit by living and praying in such a way that it invites the spirit's work among us actively longing for God to accomplish his gracious purposes in us and through us the filling of the spirit brings to God's people a deeper knowledge of Christ an increased desire for holiness a stronger commitment to unity and love a greater fruitfulness in ministry and a deeper gratitude for our salvation isn't that what you want that's what we need wouldn't this strengthen you would this not strengthen our entire body if we eagerly pursued this if you're a believer this morning I want to urge you pray like this pray that the Lord would fill you with the spirit even more and if you're not a

Christian this morning oh if you're not a Christian I want to invite you to respond to the good news of Jesus Christ he died for people like you and me he died for those who were cut off by sin in order to give us new life to give you real life satisfying life by his spirit to put you and I into a body to have something bigger than ourselves to live for you can turn away from your sins today you can place your trust in Jesus finish work and receive forgiveness and be knit in knit in with a body so Trinity Grace Church may we be a body that battles disintegration it is we've all been made one in this room if you are believer been made one in the spirit so let's strive for unity in the local church through the spirit who made us one may

God help us Lord we pray for your spirit to come that is what we need we don't need more of ourselves we don't need more independence more things to go our way Lord we submit ourselves afresh and ask for you to fall give us the spirit and give it to us in abundance Lord we ask for this feeling Lord that we might treasure you and fight for holiness and fight for one another against sin against darkness and the devil Lord would you empower!

us by your spirit to live for you as one body to bring honor to your name and may more be brought in pray this in the name of Jesus Amen you've been listening to a message on 1st Corinthians during a Sunday service at Trinity Grace Church for more information please visit us