

From The Pulpit Of



One Body

No. 29

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Series: 1 Corinthians

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Text

[12] 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. [13] For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

[14] For the body does not consist of one member but of many. [15] 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. [16] And if the ear 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. [17] If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? [18] But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. [19] If all were a single member, where would the body be? [20] As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

[21] 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] On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, [23] and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, [24] which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, [25] that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. [26] If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

[27] Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Introduction

- Arouse Interest:
 - Gary Siler was a 23-year-old man who was training to be a firefighter. He was young, strong, and healthy. He was a strong candidate for the position.¹

¹ Nancy Rones, "3 Stories of Unstoppable People Living with Autoimmune Diseases," *JNJ.Com*, 29 March 2017, <https://www.jnj.com/health-and-wellness/3-stories-of-unstoppable-people-living-with-autoimmune-diseases>.

- But over the course of just one night, Siler found himself thrown into a world of pain.
 - His joints started to become inflamed and stiff. Siler described the experience as one day waking up in a concrete cast. In his own words, “My feet were the worst: putting weight on them felt like walking on broken glass.”
 - For months, Siler’s doctors struggled to try to pin down the exact cause of his pain. It took several tests before Siler received a concrete diagnosis. Unfortunately, Siler was a rare case when a young man is actually diagnosed with Rheumatoid arthritis.
 - Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease where the immune system loses control and causes sustained inflammation in the soft inner lining of joints. And had Siler’s condition remained untreated, he would have lost his job as a firefighter due to his own body fighting against him.²
- Surface Needs:
 - Stories like this tend to remind me of how much I take my own health for granted. How good it would be for people like me to sit with those who are struggling with chronic illnesses or pain. Getting to know those who physically struggle in these ways would help to humble us. Would help us to rethink what is important in life.
 - It would also help us to be better readers of Scripture as well. It would help us to understand and feel what Paul means when he says that God’s people ought to think and act like one body. It would give us a clearer picture of how bad things could get if the body started working against itself.
- Orient To Text:
 - As we jump back into 1 Corinthians this morning, we need to remember that Paul is addressing a divided church. These Corinthians are prideful. They’re vain. Some think they are better than others because of their social status, and others think they are superior because of the level of spiritual experiences they have attained.
 - But Paul is trying to cut through all of that. According to Paul, God’s people are supposed to act like the body of Christ. They are supposed to think and act as one with one goal of glorifying Christ and caring for the weaker members within their midst.

² “Rheumatoid Arthritis,” *Innovative Medicine Global*, 27 June 2025, <https://www.jnj.com/innovativemedicine/immunology/rheumatology/rheumatoid-arthritis>.

- In short, Paul is arguing here that **God's people stick together because Christ himself has stuck us together.**

Organizational Sentence: The outline of the text is fairly clear. In verses 12-13 Paul addresses why God's people stick with one another. Then in verses 14-20 Paul addresses how these changes should lead us to serve where we are at. Finally, in 21-27, Paul addresses how we ought to share what we have.

Stick With One Another (12-13)

- Now, just a qualification on this sermon. If you're new to Christianity and you're visiting for the first time, I just want to say that I'm thankful that you're here. I'd love to talk with you after the service.
- But this particular sermon is a very in-house sermon. This is God talking to his church about how church is supposed to be done. So there's not as much reference to you.
- But I hope that by telling what the church should be like and why, you might be interested in checking out the church more for yourself. You might be interested in joining this community yourself. That's what I'm aiming for.
- Now let's look at verses 12-13 together.
 - [12] 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. [13] For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
- Various commentators note that in the midst of all the divisions and infighting within the church of Corinth, it's interesting how Paul uses the language of one body here.³
- He could have said here, "and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with the church."
- But he doesn't say that. Instead, Paul says, "So it is with Christ." In other words, the church is not simply to be thought of as our body. Fundamentally, the church is to be thought of as Christ's body. He is the ground of our unity, because fundamentally, he is the one who united all believers to himself.
- This is also reiterated in verse 13. It's a little contested here whether or not baptism into the Spirit and drinking from the Spirit are a reference to actual

³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries VOLUME 7 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018). See also Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011) two-tiered Pentecost minor point, but it's important for those of us who come from a Pentecostal background.

baptism and communion or not. But I think what is more important here is who is the one who is baptizing us in the Spirit and causing us to drink from the Spirit.

- Notice in the ESV, verse 13 is filled with passive verbs. We were all baptized. We were made to drink. If you are reading from an NIV, they translate verse 13 as we were all baptized by one Spirit. But the Greek behind this passage is very similar to John the Baptist's proclamations when he claims in Mark 1:8:
 - [8] I have baptized you with water, but he [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."
- In other words, Jesus is the one who baptized us in the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the one who makes us drink from the Spirit. Jesus is the one who united all true Christians to himself and, by doing so, united us to one another as well.
- Brothers and sisters, if you are a Christian member of our church today, you need to know that it is not an accident that you are here with us today. According to Paul, Jesus is the one who sticks us all together.

Application

- And this has several important applications for all of us today.
- One application from this text is that there is no such thing as two-tiered Christianity.
- This is a little bit of a side point, but it's important for those of us who have come from any sort of Pentecostal background. This is not me shaming any true Christians within Pentecostal churches, but there are some things they teach that I disagree with. One of the key tenets of traditional Pentecostalism is this doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- In their teaching, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a separate spiritual experience from conversion that only certain Christians get. When this happens, the Holy Spirit is supposed to come upon a Christian in a unique way to empower them for a higher level of spirituality.⁴
- Now, to be fair to our Pentecostal brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit does come upon people in particularly unique ways throughout the book of Acts. But I would say that the book of Acts is a transition period in the Bible between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. And the things that happen in that transition period aren't necessarily meant to be normal for the Christian life today.
- I think passages that talk about the New Covenant, like Joel 2:28-28; Mark 1:8 and our passage today in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 seem to teach that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is something that is supposed to happen to all Christians. And in 1 Corinthians 12:13, it seems pretty clear that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is

⁴ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second edition. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2020).

- actually a reference to conversion because it is the moment when believers are spiritually united to Jesus Christ himself.⁵
- But more importantly for us, this kind of two-tiered Christianity, where our own personal mystical experience of the Holy Spirit sets us up to be superior over other brothers and sisters in the church, is the very kind of spiritual pride that Paul himself has been preaching against this whole time.
 - As we saw last week, in 1 Corinthians 12:3, the Holy Spirit isn't supposed to lift you or me up. He's supposed to make much of Jesus Christ and his glory. The gifts of the Holy Spirit that he gives us aren't supposed to make us better than one another. They're a means whereby we can humbly serve one another.
 - Friends, there's no such thing as super Christians in the kingdom of God. There's just Jesus and servants of Jesus.
 - Not only does this passage cut against our spiritual pride this morning, but according to Paul in verse 13, the gospel of Jesus Christ also cuts against any version of racial or class superiority. Sometimes in church, we get so used to this saying that in Christ there is no Jew or Greek, Slave or Free, that we miss the full impact of texts like these. In Paul's time, these were groups of people that don't hang out together. This would be like Paul saying, Black or White, Japanese or Korean, whether you're on Wall Street or Welfare, all of Christ's people have a place in his body.
 - Now I want to be careful how I say this, but I also want to be crystal clear. I do not believe that every Christian Conservative Republican is a White Christian Nationalist. But it blows my mind that there are pockets of the internet where people are blatantly proud of the fact that they're advocating for America to become a White Christian Nation.
 - And sometimes we just need to say the obvious thing out loud. That is a contradiction in terms. You cannot claim to espouse the values of the kingdom of Christ, a kingdom made up of believers of every tongue, tribe, and nation, and at the same time advocate for a white Christian nation. That ship won't sail.
 - Friends, I get that race relations in our country is complicated, and I'll conceded that I'm not an expert in politics. But I do think the church should just be willing to say the obvious things out loud.
 - Even a couple of years ago, when Chicago was rife with protests, even as we were all talking about legitimate reforms that needed to happen in our justice system, even then I think we should have said the obvious things out loud. That obviously not every white person is racist simply for being white.
 - Brothers and sisters, we know that's not true. You and I both know people who know us and love us, who don't know everything, who sometimes say things that

⁵ Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*. See also Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second edition. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: ZoWall Streetadvocatingndervan Academic, 2020).

- hurt our feelings, but who would be the first to apologize if they knew that some things they said and did were really hurtful to us. And we all know that within whatever ethnic group we are in, there are people within our own “tribes” who do and say things that are simply racist and wrong.
- Again, I'm not a politician. And part of the problem on both sides is that people keep trying to make this country into their own version of a Christian nation. But the church isn't a nation. It's supposed to be a witness to all nations. A witness to the world of what heaven looks like, when Christ breaks down the walls of hostility and saves a people from every tongue, tribe, and nation.
 - I don't have all the answers for the problems and divisions of our day. But if anyone should be able to stand side by side united with people from every tongue, tribe, or nation, Jew or Gentile, slave or free...If anyone should be able to do that, it should be the church.
 - We, of all people, should be able to stand together, not because we share a common bloodline, but because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, spilled his precious blood to save sinners like us and to stick us together with him in his kingdom.
 - And if Christ could love me, could die for me, could save me even when I myself was ignorant and sinful, then surely I can find a way to love you too, no matter how far the distance seems to be between me and you.
 - For Paul, God's people ought to stick together in love not simply to preserve the peace but to display the perfect peace that comes when Jesus Christ is on the throne.

Serve Where We're At (14-20)

- But what does it look like to stick together like this? Well, Paul has two applications of what it looks like for God's people to stick together today. First, in verses 14-20, Paul argues that God's people ought to serve where they're at. Then in verses 21-27, Paul argues that God's people ought to share what they have.
- So what does it mean to serve where we are at? Look with me starting at verse 15:
 - [15] 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. [16] And if the ear 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. [17] If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?[18] But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose
- Remember the context here. Paul is speaking to a church that is rife with divisions. Some people are showing off their fancy supernatural gifts of prophecy or tongues. Some people are getting jealous of others because

they don't have the gifts that so-and-so has. Based on some of the imagery here, it's very possible some people were leaving the church because of this.

- The apostle Paul steps into this mess and breaks this down like it's Sesame Street.
- Friend, if everyone were an eye, how do you think we'd smell? If my ears got jealous of my nose and took off, wouldn't I look a little funny?

Application

- It's simple to understand, but it's hard to live by. In a selfie generation, it's easy to think that you gotta look out for yourself. You gotta stand out from the crowd. You gotta be someone important.
- Some of you who might be visiting a church for the first time this morning, you might just assume that it's a dog-eat-dog world out here. And if you don't stand up, and stand out, then you'll stay down forever.
- But friends, I want to tell you this morning, the body of Christ is just built differently than the kingdoms of this world. As Paul says in verse 18, God's the one who built the church the way he did. And if that's the case, then God's the one who put the pieces of the church body together in the places where he put us. And God doesn't make mistakes.
- Friends, I may not understand where you are at or what's going on in your life today. But based on the authority of God's Word, I can tell you this. If you belong to Jesus, then you have an important role to play in his body. You have an important calling within the kingdom of God.
- And this calling isn't based on your looks, your wallet, your skills, or your smarts. It's solely based on the fact that when Jesus Christ stuck us together in this church body, he was intentional about where he was gonna stick you.
- Beloved, you may not be the guy on the stage today, but somebody can see the Savior better because of you. You may not be the life of the party, but we wouldn't experience the fullness of our life in Christ this morning if you weren't here this morning to share it with us.
- And the crazy thing about this is often we ourselves just can't see how valuable we are to the people around us.

Illustration

- One of my favorite holiday movies is Jimmy Stewart's *It's A Wonderful Life*. It's one of the rare movies that seems to grow with me as I've grown in life. It's a great movie. I'd recommend it to everybody.
- The premise of the movie is simple. What if a man wished he had never been born, and his wish came true? What's the value of one man's life in the life of a community?
- In the movie, the main character, George Bailey, is nearing the point of suicide. And right as he's about to do it, an angel comes and shows him what his community would look like if he weren't in it. And it changes his life.
- Friends, we don't always see the significance of our lives in the moment. We don't always know how much the unseen sacrifices we make really make a difference in the lives of our families and our church.
- But I want to encourage you and say to you this morning, when people leave our church, we feel their absence. It doesn't matter how big or popular they may have been. There are people who walked in quietly one day and who left just as silently. But their absence is still ringing in my heart today. They may not have known how important they were to us, but we know that when they left, it kind of felt like walking on one leg for a while.
- You don't always know how big an impact you're having on the kingdom of God. We don't always understand how important the praying mother, the faithful son, the steadfast friend, or the church Uber driver is to the life of our church. And we probably won't understand how important they are until they're gone.
- Friends, wherever God puts you, with whatever gifts you have, serve where you are to the best of your ability. Do it not because you see the significance of your life, but because Jesus sees it. Because Jesus placed you exactly where you needed to be with what you needed to have, and he doesn't make mistakes.

Share What You Have (21-27)

- So to recap Paul's argument, God's people are called to stick together because Christ has stuck us together. And this should lead us to do two things within the church today. We've looked at what it means to serve where we're at. Now we're gonna look in verses 21-27 what it means to share what we have.

- If Paul was trying to correct our self-perception in verses 14-20, then in verses 21-27, Paul is trying to correct our perception of others.⁶
- As the apostle writes in verse 21:
 - [21] 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] On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, [23] and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, [24] which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, [25] that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.
- Now, the imagery of the body of Christ starts to get a little weird here. The basic idea is this. When you get dressed, the parts of you you leave exposed aren’t necessarily the parts of you that you value the most. Often, it’s the parts you cover up that you care about the most.
- And if you still have questions about this, you should ask your parents. Cause I preached 1 Corinthians 7, and I don’t want to talk about this anymore.
- But the point is clear, isn’t it? The parts of you that are weaker or unseemly aren’t despised by hands, are they? No, your hands often move to protect the weaker parts of you.
- And that’s how it should be in the body of Christ as well.

Application

- Brothers and sisters, we need to remember this. You need to remember this, especially if things seem to be going well in your spiritual life right now.
- Jesus didn’t design the body to be made out of super Christians. Jesus intentionally put those of us who are strong, those of us with good theology, those of us who have our lives put together, he put us together with the weak. Together with Christian brothers and sisters who are a mess. Together with believers who don’t seem to be able to contribute much to the “mission” of our church.
- Friends, they’re not holding you back. You’re here to serve them. To care for them. To build them up in the gospel with whatever gifts God has given you.
- In serving and caring for them, God is actually caring for you. He’s transforming you through the process.
- We need to get this right.

⁶ John Calvin, *John Calvin’s Commentary on the Bible* (Delhi, Mumbai: Grapevine, 2023).

- You don't have the smarts that you have simply because you worked hard in your studies. God gave you the opportunity to study.
 - You don't have the wealth that you have simply because you worked hard. God gave you the right job at the right time.
 - You didn't attain the level of Christian maturity you're at on your own. God gave you the right pastors, churches, disciplers in your life so you could now go and disciple those around you.
- They're not holding you back. You're here for them. And this should make us way more patient with the people in our churches. This should make us way more kind to those who rub us the wrong way. This should make us way more generous with our wealth and finances.
 - The apostle Paul sums all of this up in a spectacular fashion in verse 26:
 - [26] If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.
 - Friends, do you feel that? When you pray through the members list of our church do you feel the pain of our people? Do you remember the wife who longs to be a mom? Do you weep for the son who is battling depression? Do you feel the frustration of your brothers and sisters as they strive against sin, but they just can't seem to kill it for good? Do you feel the despair as beloveds of our church sit by the hospital beds of their loved ones?
 - Are we the body of Christ or not?
 - Not only are you here for them, but according to Paul in verse 21, you need them. Friends, when we do succeed, when we finally do see some form of victory in our life, in our maturity, in our family or our careers, are we humble enough to admit that we didn't just wake up one day and decide to be awesome? Can we be humble enough to admit that whatever measure of success that we have is largely due to the little people in our lives? The people who were praying for us, who were there when we needed to talk, who cared for us when we're sick, who watched our kids in an emergency, who read the Bible with us and walked with us even when we were being a thorn in their side?
 - [26] If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.
 - What a great verse! What a great way to look at our church!
 - And I know, it goes against everything you and I have been taught about the way life works in America.
 - Some of you, even here in this room, might be thinking right now, this is some sappy Gen Z nonsense. (I'm technically a millennial).

- But I get it. We all want to be the guy who pulled themselves up by our own bootstraps. We all want to be independent. If there's a problem in our lives, we want to be the kind of person who can fix it by myself.
- Now I'm not against hard work. I'm not against entrepreneurship. I think a lot of things in our world could be fixed if we all took more responsibility for the things going wrong in our lives.
- But friends, if we could save ourselves, Jesus wouldn't have needed to come down and save us.
 - Jesus gave up his riches to make us rich when we were poor.
 - Jesus gave us his righteousness to clothe us when we were sinners.
 - Jesus took the initiative to unite us to himself so that he could take the blame for our sin and we could get the credit for his righteousness.
 - Jesus took our death so we could have his life.
 - And even now, after he's conquered death and ascended to the right hand of his Father, Jesus takes our prayers and makes them his prayers.
- And if he's our king. If that's our head. Then we just gotta admit that the body of Christ is built different than America. And it's about time we started acting like it.
- God's people stick together, because he has stuck us together. And this should lead us to serve where we're at and share what we have.