

Spiritual Gifts: Their Unity and Diversity

1 Corinthians 12:12-21

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In 1 Corinthians 12:1, Paul says, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” Paul basically just said, “Now concerning spiritual,”—I don’t want you to be ignorant about things that are spiritual, and went on to speak about the gifts of the Spirit, verse 4, that there are different “. . . gifts”—of the Spirit—“but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” God’s Spirit gives to every believer a gift, and that gift is given for the profit to all.

Paul is dealing and addressing with the issue of spiritual gifts. Through the book of Corinthians, he’s dealing with problems in the church at Corinth. The problems that existed in the church at Corinth still exist in the church today. You might think of 1 Corinthians as 1 Californians, and all the issues that they had in the church we have in the church today. That’s why God provided this letter for us, to get correction and instruction that we would not be ignorant concerning spiritual matters and especially as it pertains to the subject of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Paul was speaking to them about spiritual issues.

Last week we saw the problem of the gifts of the Spirit, verses 1-3; we saw the source and purpose of the gifts, verses 4-7; then we saw the specific gifts mentioned in verses 8-11. Now, Paul begins with verse 12. Go back with me to verse 12. Paul wanted the Corinthians to recognize their oneness within the body of Christ and at the same time wanted them to see their functional diversity within the body. This is simple, but it’s not simplistic. It’s not hard to grasp, but it’s really a marvelous, true deep understanding that we come to in this text; that is, in the body of Christ we have unity, and in the body of Christ we have diversity.

I use the word “body” because that’s a reference to the church here in the text, and we’ll talk about that metaphor more in just a moment, but the focus or the theme, and I want you to catch this so when we go through these verses they’ll be easier to understand, is unity and diversity. I think I said last Wednesday night that every place the gifts of the Spirit are mentioned in the New Testament, you have that common theme—unity and diversity, the subject of love and the glory of God and the edification and the building up of the body of Christ. Those are the two themes that run through our text tonight that in the working of the Spirit in our lives and in the church, and the gifts of the Spirit in the church, that they’re intended to bring unity, even though they’re in the gifts diversity, they’re not all the same gifts.

Let me outline it for you beginning in verse 12 to verse 13. We have oneness of the body. This is the unity section that Paul wanted the believers in Corinth to get. He didn’t want them divided. He says in verse 12, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” Notice the repetition of the word “one.” He’s talking about unity—there’s one body, it’s got many members, that’s diversity—and all the members of that one body, there it is again, “. . . being many, are one

body”—there it is again—“so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,”—again, this is the church—“whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

First of all, we see that we have unity or oneness in the midst of our diversity in the body. Paul wanted them to understand three things, and I want you to get these subpoints. I think they're going to appear on the screen, but I want you to see them in the text, three things Paul wanted them to know about this oneness in the body. First of all, in verse 12, that there is only one body. That's a fancy way of saying there's only one Church, not one denomination but one true church, the body of Christ, which is universal. A lot of people don't often think about this, but the Church is both universal, all those who are born again are members of the Church out of different persuasions or denominational backgrounds or different churches, that's the universal Church. That's the church that Jesus said, “. . . I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” and in order to be a part of that church, you have to be born again, you have to be regenerated. If you haven't been born again, you're not a part of that church.

You can be a part of a local church and not be even really a Christian, and there's a lot of people that go to church and they're not really saved, they're not really born again, so they're not a part of the church that Jesus said, “. . . I will,” which by the way was in a future tense, and He said that in Matthew 16. That building of that church started, I believe, in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came and the Church was born. I'll come back to that more in just a moment, but keep that in mind that on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2, the Church was born when the Spirit came and formed that body of Christ. So, Paul wants them to understand that there's just one body.

The Bible uses the word “body” as a metaphor for the Church. The Bible also uses the word “bride.” We're the bride of Christ, He's the heavenly bridegroom, and we'll be caught up to meet our Lord in the air and there'll be the wedding supper of the Lamb, so we as the Church are the bride of Christ. The Bible also uses the picture of the Church being a building. It's like many little pieces put together, bricks, and we compact this building and we're a habitation of God through the Spirit. The Bible uses also the metaphor of the Church as a family of God and that we are brothers and sisters in Christ. If you look around the room tonight, you have a whole bunch of brothers and sisters in the family of God. If you're a Christian, you are a member of the family of God, and you have brothers and sisters in Christ. So, they are one body.

Paul used the human body with its unity and diversity to illustrate the body of Christ. There's only one true church, Ephesians 4:4, where Paul says, “There is one body” Going back to verse 12, he uses it there very clearly, “For as the body is one, and hath many members,”—just as my physical body has many members but it's one—“and all the members of that one body, being many”—again, the emphasis is one body. Like I said, this is basic, but it's essential Christianity 101—one true Church, and to be a part of that Church, you must be born again. Jesus told Nicodemus, John 3, you must be born again to be a part of that Church.

The second thing I want to point out is in verses 13, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into

one body” I’m going to do my best to share my heart, to share what I believe I’ve discovered is true about this verse, but I don’t want to get too bogged down or get stuck here. Some day I’ll use this as my starting point and do a whole message on what is known as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But I think this is a very, very important verse that in the didactic section of the Bible, the doctrinal section, the teaching section of the Bible, it’s not a gospel, it’s not the book of Acts, it’s not historical narrative. Paul is speaking about the Church, the body, and it’s unity and its diversity, and it’s in the context of teaching and instructing these believers that we’re ignorant about the Holy Spirit and it’s a very, very important and very key verse.

I want you to get your pencils ready, if you can. I don’t think they’re going to be on the screen, but I want you just to jot down some other places in the New Testament where this idea of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the unity of the body are referred to in the Bible. First, and we’ll turn there in just a moment, is Ephesians 4:4-5, where Paul mentions one Spirit, one baptism. He also mentions one body. There’s seven things he mentions there. Write that down. You’re going to want to study that. Write down also the Scriptures where Paul the apostle gives us some further references to the baptism—Romans 6, and this is an amazing section to me, Romans 6:3-5, and write down Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12. I just want to give those to you. I’m not going to take the time to turn to them all, but they’re all references to the formation of the body of Christ and what all Christians share in common, the spiritual realities that are true of all Christians in this period of time or dispensation known as the Church Age, which is what we’re living in right now.

Paul is telling us how we got into the body. How do we get out of Adam and sin and condemnation? Every person born in the world is born in Adam. Adam’s their federal head, and Adam’s sin and disobedience and condemnation is on them, so the whole world is separated from God, dead in trespasses and sins, and under the judgment of God in Adam. How do we get out of Adam and get in Christ? How many of you have understood that in the Bible that Christians are described as being “in Christ”? You ever heard that phrase, “in Christ”? If you’ve read Ephesians 1, you’ve read that phrase in that one chapter over and over and over and over, “. . . in Christ . . . in Christ” Romans 8:1, by the way, I know a really good book on the eighth chapter of Romans that you should read by Pastor John Miller because I go into great depth in this first chapter of that book about what it means to be “in Christ.”

What does Roman 8:1 say? “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,”—put a big fat period after that because that’s where that verse stops. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” If there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, I want to be in Christ Jesus; and if I’m going to be in Christ, I want to know how do I get into Christ Jesus? The answer to that is you get in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, which I believe properly interpreted the title should be the baptism with or in, more accurately, the Holy Spirit. I believe every Christian has been baptized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of regeneration or salvation and that they were taken out of Adam and placed in Christ. Another truth about that’s so marvelous, and again, Romans 8, check it out, Paul ends that chapter with no separation—no condemnation, no separation, and in between

no defeat—and he says, “. . . all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” So, you want to be well versed in Romans 8, and that's why I've taken that section and written that book on Romans 8. It's so important.

I believe that what we have here in verse 13 is a very, very important verse explaining what is known as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now, Christians have divided over this doctrine and what is called “the baptism.” There are those that believe that it's a second experience after salvation, that it's subsequent or afterwards, that we should pray for it, we should ask for it, and that the Holy Spirit comes upon us and empowers us. There are those that believe that if you have that gift and experience, that you will speak in tongues as evidence of that gift. I'm going to point out from this chapter that I don't believe that's the case. But that one work of the Holy Spirit was never ever intended by God to bring division, quite the opposite, it was intended to bring unity not division, and it's so sad that we have divided over it.

If you differ on this view, it doesn't mean you're unorthodox, it doesn't mean you're heretical, it's not that kind of a doctrine, but it does affect and connect and interlink to a lot of other doctrines that when you understand properly they all fit together, and it will help you to grow and mature in your walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. The believing sinner becomes a member of the Church, the body of Christ, through the baptism in the Holy Spirit. That little phrase there in verse 13, he says, “For by . . .” The word “by” there would more perhaps be better translated to “in.” It's a little Greek word that just has two letters, it's a preposition, just e-n. Most often it's translated “in,” but it can be translated with, in, or by. Here, he's saying, “For by one Spirit,”—or in one Spirit—“are we all”—notice “we” in verse 13 are Christians, and “all” all of us, there isn't the “haves” and the “have nots,” and there are so many that have the idea that this is a subsequent, second to salvation experience and then you have the “haves” and the “have nots.”

I don't believe in Christianity you have the “haves” and the “have nots.” All Christians have all the blessings of Christ Jesus. There are no classes or categories. They may not know they have them, they many not understand they have them, they may not know what they are, thus they haven't been able to draw from them or activate them or enjoy them. You know, you can't enjoy what you don't know you have. Did you ever notice that?

I used to throw cash in my sock drawer next to my bed in a little nightstand. There were times I remember I had money in there and didn't know it and needed some cash. It's like, “Aw, man, I don't have any money. I need money.” Then, weeks later I find all that money in that little drawer and think, What a bummer, I was rich and didn't know it. I had all that money and didn't know it. It's kind of nice to know what you have - right? - because you can't use and you can't enjoy what you don't know you have.

This is a doctrine that is true of all Christians, all believers. The reason why I get so amped about this truth is because the church I grew up in and learned the Bible in, I was taught the opposite. I was taught that you can be born agin, saved, have the Spirit, but not be baptized in the Holy Spirit and that you should seek it, you should pray for it, and you should ask God for it. So, you have the “haves” and “have nots,” and there's a lot of people that feel like they're

second-class Christians because they haven't been "baptized" in the Holy Spirit.

I believe that Paul was saying that as Christians, verse 13, ". . . we all"—have been—"baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles . . ." In Christ, in the body, in the family of God, in our position is our standing before God, Jews aren't more spiritual, Gentiles aren't more spiritual. There's no favored class or race, ". . . there is neither male nor female,"—or in our text—" . . . bond or free; and have been all"—a-l-l—"been made to drink into one Spirit." So, we've been baptized by the Spirit into Christ the moment we were saved, we have all that we need, in Christ we are fully complete, and we've all been made to drink of that one Spirit, which is so very, very important for us to understand.

Just real quick, I don't often do this, but turn to Ephesians 4 in your Bibles. This is one of the sections I told you to check out, and you could actually study from verses 1-16, or even beyond that, but I want to point out earlier in verse 1 Paul says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,"—he's exhorting them to a worthy walk. How do we walk worthy? Verse 2, "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." There again, you have that unity of the body—loving, humble, longing to serve the Lord and minister to others and loving one another.

Verse 3, don't miss this, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Notice what Paul says, verse 4, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith,"—and here's our important word—"one baptism." It's not talking about water baptism because not all Christians have had water baptism, and they're not all water baptized, and they're all baptized the same way. This baptism in verse 5 is talking about I believe the baptism of the Holy Spirit when we're taken out of Adam and placed in Christ—one baptism, all Christians.

Verse 6, "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all,"—Paul's from the south—"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." And, you could just keep on going down the text here. It's amazing how he talks about the gifts given to the church, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry,"—that we all grow in love. I wanted you to note, verse 5, that ". . . one baptism,"—and verse 7—"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." It's so very, very important.

Let me say just a couple of things more about this doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, being placed into the body of Christ. First, it identifies every believer with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. This is being identified with Christ in His death, in His burial, in His resurrection. This Sunday we're going to get the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Last Sunday we got the death, the crucifixion of Christ, so God sees us in Christ, dead to sin, buried, risen with Christ, alive and walking in newness of life. It identifies every believer with Christ, puts you in the body, and identifies you with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It's our position in Christ.

Secondly, it places every believer into the spiritual body of Christ. Thirdly, it is a spiritual reality that marks every believer in this Church Age. I don't believe the baptism of the Holy Spirit was in the Old Testament. Do I believe that the Spirit was there? Yes. Do I believe people were filled with the Spirit? Yes. Do I believe the Holy Spirit anointed people there? Yes, but there was no Church. There was no body of Christ. The Church was born on the day of Pentecost, and I believe it will be taken to heaven at the rapture. The Church was born at Pentecost, and will be taken to heaven—future tense—at the rapture.

It's interesting that there is a contrast, I believe, and again, between the baptism and what is known as the filling of the Holy Spirit. They are not one in the same. Some people try to put them together, "Well, it doesn't matter what you call it just as long as you have it." I understand that, but if you don't call it the right thing, how do you know what you have? You can't just call it whatever you want. What does the Bible say it is? If we're not using the same dictionary, then we're in big trouble. We have the vocabulary, but not the same dictionary?

Let me give you a difference between "filling" and "baptized." Here's what I believe. I believe the moment you are born again that you have been regenerated, given new life by the Spirit. That means the Holy Spirit comes inside of you, and your body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. It's called indwelling. God lives in you—indwelling. All Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of them, and at that very same moment, too, the Holy Spirit seals you, and He does that unto the day of redemption. That seal cannot be broken. It speaks of ownership, and it speaks of security. Also, I believe that the moment you're saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit and sealed, that you are basically placed "in Christ" and that you are justified and declared righteous.

Now, that doesn't mean that you have been filled with the Spirit. What happens is that the moment you're saved you're also baptized in the Spirit, you might say with or by, but you're placed in the body of Christ. After you're saved—listen to me carefully—the whole lifelong of the Christian, from salvation to glorification, is a life of what's called sanctification—being changed by the Spirit of God into the image of Jesus Christ. Do you know what it takes to become sanctified? Being filled with the Spirit.

Let me make it as simple as I can. Being filled with the Spirit doesn't mean you get more of the Holy Spirit. He doesn't come in in pieces, He comes in entirely. What it means is the Holy Spirit gets more of you—that you surrender to Him, that you yield to Him, and that you are controlled by Him. One of the best ways to understand what it means to be filled is to basically change it to "controlled" by the Spirit. If you're a Christian, don't you want to be controlled by the Holy Spirit? I do. It makes me a better husband, and I need a lot of help doing that, make you a better wife. Don't laugh at me, it makes you a better wife, too. It makes you a better everything. It makes you more Christlike. So, I want to be controlled by the Spirit.

Here's a little tidbit, and I'll try my best to move on. In the New Testament we are commanded as believers to be filled, but we are never, ever, commanded—there's no imperative in the New Testament—for us to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Do you want to know why? Because it

happens automatically. Just like in the Bible, never does it command us to be sealed with the Spirit. Why? Because it happens automatically. It's just the work of the Holy Spirit. We don't have to pray, "Lord, seal me. Lord, just please seal me. I feel so unsealed right now, just seal me, Lord." Dude! You're sealed. "Lord, indwell me, Lord. Just live inside me." He does live inside of you! But we are in Ephesians 5:18 commanded, it's called an imperative, and it's in the passive tense, "Let the Spirit fill you." It's in the present tense, go on continually being filled.

By the way, you can be filled more than once, but you only get baptized by the Spirit once when you're saved; so we should pray for, seek, and ask to be filled with the Spirit. All through the book of Acts, even after Acts 2, it says they were filled. Then, again, they were filled. Then, again, they were filled. Then, again, they were filled. So, it's many fillings, one baptism. Nowhere in the New Testament are we commanded to pray for, ask for, or seek this baptism of the Holy Spirit, it happens the moment we are saved and places us into Christ. I don't believe that speaking in tongues is by any means a sign that a person has been baptized by the Holy Spirit. That's not what the New Testament teaches at all.

Let's move on and cover what we need to still yet tonight. Thirdly, verse 13, we're all made to drink. I probably should've covered this sooner, but go back to verse 13 for a minute. Not only are we baptized " . . . by one Spirit"—into one body, but look at the end of verse 13, " . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Jesus, in John 7, actually said, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. 38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. 39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy [Spirit] was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" So, we've been baptized, and we've been able to drink of that one Spirit.

Let's move to verses 14-18, and there we see the diversity of the body. "For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." God sovereignly puts in the body those members with those gifts that He wants as He so pleases. In this section, verses 14-18, Paul wanted them to recognize their diversity within the one body, the unity; and four principles are stated.

The first one is in verse 14, the body performs many functions. Look at verse 14, "For the body is not one member, but many." So, there's a diversity in the body. One member does not consist as a body. An arm by itself is not a body. If you have just a foot, you don't have a body. I heard of a youth pastor that was trying to convey this idea to a youth group and he actually took a football and painted on the football what looked like a big eyeball. It looked like an eye. He wrapped it in a blanket to make it look like a newborn baby and brought it to church. He asked some of the kids to look at the new baby that was just born. When they pulled back the blanket, it was just a big eyeball looking at them and they freaked out. I mean, that's a

monstrosity, right? Would you like to see my new baby? It's just an eyeball.

Or, I've often thought, What would we do if on Sunday morning an eyeball rolled up to the main entrance in the foyer and just wanted to roll down the aisle and sit in a pew and join us for the service. We'd be freaking out, right? So, there's a unity in the body, but there's diversity—we have eyes, we have ears, we have a nose, we have a mouth, we have hands, we have feet. He's basically describing the church, that one member doesn't have all the gifts and isn't just all the church.

A Christian who doesn't join a church or a body, a local assembly, is cutting himself short from the benefits and blessings of being a part of the body of Christ, the Church. Christians should not expect to have all the gifts.

Go to verses 15-16, we see each function is important in the body, whether it be physical body or the Church, the body of Christ. He says, "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" Your foot's not your hand, your foot's not your mouth, your foot's not your smelling or your hearing, but it is part of the body. If your feet bother you, it can really mess you up. It's so very important that we understand that.

Notice verse 16, "And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" Sometimes people will say, "Well, I don't have the gift of preaching," or "I don't have the gift of teaching," or "I don't have the gift of miracles," "I don't have the gift of hospitality," or "I don't have the gift of administration, so I'm not important. I'm not a part of the body." Yes, you are. In the body of Christ there are no vestigial organs, all of them are necessary and important, and God has placed them there, and they should be used for the good of the body and for the glory of God. Each function, verses 15-16, is important. Don't belittle your importance just because you have not another person's gifts. Diversity is not inferiority. Let me repeat that: Diversity is not inferiority. Your feet and your hands, they're different, but they're important, and they work together.

Thirdly, notice verse 17, each function must be performed. We know that, right? When you get older and certain parts of your body don't function properly anymore, that's a bummer. You need everything to work together. Look at verse 17, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" It's so very, very true. All the members perform one function, then other necessary functions would go undone. If there were only one function in the body, what if everybody in the church were teachers, who would be taught? If everybody just had the one gift, how would that work? It would be a monstrosity, is what it would be.

Fourthly, notice verse 18, God assigns each a function. This is a key verse, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." Simply stated, God sovereignly, graciously places in the body of Christ the gifted members as He so chooses. The sovereign Spirit gives you the gift He wants you to have, the sovereign Lord places you in the body, and we're all different; but we're all needed, important, and necessary. So, be content.

It's God's grace. Do what God has called you to do, and don't be jealous of someone else's gift.

Here's the third and last section, verses 19-21. "And if they were all one member,"—here we see the mutual need of the body's members—"where were the body? 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body." So, one body of Christ yet many members. Verse 21, "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." We do need each other. It's so very important.

My body needs my mouth—open your mouth, put your food in. Imagine getting up to eat breakfast and you've got this beautiful breakfast, you're all excited to eat this breakfast, and your mouth won't open. Stick it in your ear? Well, what do you do? Or, your hands won't move. You can't pick it up. Your body's not working. That's, many times, what the church is doing, isn't it? Find out what your gift is. Be a part of a local fellowship, and exercise your gift in love for the building up of the body—for the good of the body, for the glory of God.

You say, "Well, how do I discover my gift?" Romans 12, " . . . present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service . . . that ye may prove"—or discover—"what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." What better time to surrender your body to God than Communion, the Lord's table.

So, as we pray and begin to worship, we're going to pass out the elements. We ask you to hold your portion until we're all served, and then we're going to pray and partake together. What a great, great opportunity; what a great time to actually say, "Lord, use me. Lord, have Your way in me and through me. Make me a blessing. Out of my life, may Jesus shine." Amen?