

## The Body of Christ

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12–27

Code: 1309

If you have your Bibles, turn to the 12th chapter of 1 Corinthians. First Corinthians chapter 12. The title of our message to you tonight is “The Body of Christ.” There has been, in the last couple of years, a tremendous amount of dialogue on this particular subject. And there is today, in the frame of Christianity, a rebellion against denominationalism and against the organized church and an emphasis on the body of Christ with extreme emphasis given to nonstructural type of format. No organization of any kind at all.

And, of course, I feel that that’s going a little too far, because in the New Testament you had very definitely certain organizational structures. There were obviously elders and presbyters and bishops. Of course all of those are the same thing; it just means pastors. And it’s not a hierarchy. There were also deacons who ministered. There were also these elders to be ordained in every city. There were those who had the oversight of the flock. So, there was, to a degree, a certain organization which was necessary in order to assure that every particular flock had a shepherd and had those to minister to it.

So, there was a minimum of organization. And so, there’s been much discussion, in recent days, about the idea of the body of Christ. And most decidedly, I suppose the saddest part of all the discussion is the ignorance of most people on the subject altogether when it is, in fact, perhaps the greatest subject in understanding Christian relationships. We don’t know where we belong or who we really are without understanding the concept of the body of Christ. And when we do understand it, we understand not only our obligation to God and relation to Him through Christ, but our obligation and relation to every other believer in the world and what our ministries are to be together. And so, it’s very, very strategic that we understand the concept of the body of Christ.

There is today so much organization and structure that it is true that the true Church is often lost in the fog and many major denominations are nothing but great groups of people who want to rally around some point other than Jesus Christ. Tragically, that’s the case. And they exist purely as an organizational structure without any life, without any proper function in relation to Jesus Christ. What is the Church, and what is it that we are, the body of Christ? What does it mean?

Well, before we look particularly at the body of Christ, I want us to see exactly what we are as a Church by looking at several metaphors that are given in the New Testament. Some of these metaphors come from the Old Testament. Three very dominant ones – if you’re taking notes, you want to get these down – three very dominant metaphors that the New Testament uses to describe the Church, which are also Old Testament metaphors to describe Israel, are these: the bride, the vineyard, and the flock.

Now, each of these metaphors was an Old Testament designation of Israel. Israel was God’s bride, God’s vineyard, and God’s flock. All of them are repeated in the New Testament. We are Christ’s bride, we are the branches of which He is the Vine, and we also are His flock of which He is the Shepherd.

Now, in the Old Testament, God looked upon Israel in her maidenhood – Hosea tells us this – God betrothed Israel to Himself. God entered into a marriage covenant with Israel. Spiritually, Israel became God’s bride people. And then, from that point on, God had to deal with Israel’s continual unfaithfulness, continual acts of spiritual adultery as Israel went after other gods incessantly. And Israel, Hosea says, was indeed an unfaithful wife.

Also in the New Testament, the Church is seen as a vine, as well as we are also seen as a bride. And in the Old Testament, the vine was – or the vineyard, either particular metaphor – represented Israel. God said that He went and planted a vineyard. He said, “I planted it in a very fertile hill.” And this was a picture of God taking Israel out of Egypt and putting them in Canaan. God said, “I removed them, and I planted this vine in a very fertile hill. There it took root and filled the land.” And then God built a watchtower, and from the watchtower God guarded that vineyard and He also built a wine vat to prepare the vintage.

And He looked over His vineyard, Isaiah tells us, and He wanted His vineyard to yield righteousness, but His vineyard yielded wild grapes of injustice, unrighteousness, oppression, and sin. And so, Isaiah 51 says, “God made His vineyard a waste.” And He did.

The third Old Testament metaphor God used was that Israel was the flock, and He was the Shepherd of Israel. He led Joseph like a flock the Bible says. As He had redeemed them from Egypt, says Isaiah, he lifted them up and carried them like you would carry a lamb. So, after the Babylonian captivity, Isaiah again says that He gathered the lambs in His arms and gently led those that were with young. And God has a relationship to Israel that is that of a shepherd to a flock.

Now, there we see three images that God used to determine His relationship to Israel in the Old Testament. Each of those images shows God’s relation to Israel. And it stresses – now mark this – it stresses that God’s dealing with His people was direct. It was direct, and it was a sovereign saving ministry as well as a keeping ministry.

So, in the Old Testament, God chose Israel as His bride. He planted Israel as His vineyard. He shepherded Israel as His flock.

Now, when we come to the New Testament, Jesus boldly applies these very same metaphors to the Church. He emphasizes even more strongly the personal relationship. Let me illustrate it. First of all, the Old Testament metaphor of the marriage, Jesus applies to us by saying He is the Bridegroom and we are – what? – the bride. He says, “I am the Bridegroom.” And you’ll remember in the Gospels that when the Bridegroom showed up, fasting became unnecessary. “Let’s get on with the festivities; the Bridegroom is here.”

Paul describes this metaphor in greater detail, with a reference to Christ’s loving self-sacrifice for the Church. He talks also about Christ’s leadership over the Church, His final purpose for the Church. Christ has taken the Church as a bride in order that – and this is the book of Ephesians – that He might present that Church to Himself. Christ has taken us as a bride to present us to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or blemish or any such thing.

In other words, He gathered us as a chaste and pure virgin. And so, we as a Church are related to Christ as a bride to the Bridegroom. In fact, at the end of revelation, when we go to be with Jesus Christ in Glory, the Bible says we shall have a supper. What kind of supper is it? It’s a marriage supper, that’s right.

Not only that, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 it tells us that God has given to us the *arrabōna* of the Spirit. And the Greek word *arrabōna* literally means engagement ring. And the reason we know we’re going to be married to Jesus Christ is because we have an engagement ring who is none other than the Holy Spirit. So, the marriage metaphor is carried all throughout Paul’s writing particularly, and culminating in John’s vision of the great marriage supper of the Lamb in the New Jerusalem at the end of the book of Revelation.

So, Jesus uses the marriage metaphor to describe the Church. Jesus also took up the image of the vineyard. In the parable of the wicked husbandman in Mark 12 – and there He refers it to Israel – but He also extended it, because in John chapter 15, He says, “I am the true Vine, and ye are all” – what? – “branches.” And the same metaphor is used there. The Church are the branches which are dependent upon the vine. We must abide in Him, and we must be subject to the purging of the Vinedresser. We are the branches, and He is the Vine.

And so, Jesus used the vine metaphor. But He did not stop there. He also used the Shepherd

metaphor. We are a flock, John 10, are we not? “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” And Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He goes out into the wilderness to save just one of His lost sheep. He lays down His life for the sheep. He leads the sheep into good pasture. He protects the sheep from wolves. This metaphor is expanded all throughout the New Testament.

So, there you have three basic Old Testament metaphors that are applied by Jesus to the Church. These are the main ones. Now, there are four other ones. These are the main ones that are in the Old Testament. There are four other ones that are alluded to in the Old Testament that Christ also uses where the New Testament applies to the Church. They are these: God’s people are also a kingdom. A kingdom. And by that we mean a kingdom is a sphere of rule. A kingdom is a dominion where somebody rules. And we, as Christ’s own beloved sons, children, brothers – God’s sons, Christ’s brothers – are in the dominion of God’s rule and Christ’s rule. We are literally, right now in His spiritual kingdom in the sense that He rules us. We are a kingdom.

For example, Paul says in Colossians 1:13 that God has delivered us – now watch this – from the kingdom of darkness and translated us to the kingdom of – whom? – His dear Son. That’s right, His dear Son. And Christ even exercises His rule over us through the Holy Spirit. If you read carefully between the lines kind of, this is what’s being said in Romans 14:17 where it says, “For the kingdom of God” – mark it – “does not mean food and drink but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” We are literally a kingdom.

Then not only that, but another metaphor that we are designated by in the New Testament, we are also a household or a family. We are sons of God and brothers of Christ aren’t we? We are joint heirs according to Romans chapter 8, brothers according to Hebrews chapter 2. God has begotten us again – has He not? – into His family He has adopted us. He has sent His Holy Spirit into our hearts whereby we call Him Abba Father, which in Greek means Papa, a term of endearment or closeness. And we are to take no anxious thought for tomorrow, because we know our Father knows our needs before we ever even think of them. We are to occupy ourselves with the kingdom of God and all the other things will be added unto us.

Then thirdly, we are not only a kingdom, in this little section, and a household or a family, we are also a building. The Church is a building. A building, incidentally, not made with hands but a building nevertheless. Who is our foundation? Paul said, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ.” And we are built up on that foundation, the apostles being the first ones on the foundation, and we from there on up. We are a building of God.

Then fourthly, we are a body. The body of Christ. And this particular metaphor – watch this – has absolutely no Old Testament equivalent. None at all. The first three have major Old Testament equivalents. The second three in a minor sense alluded in the Old Testament. This one has no Old Testament allusions whatsoever. The concept does not even exist in the Old Testament.

You say, “So what?” So this. This is our unique position in Christ. We are the body of Christ. This is unique. It has no Old Testament equivalent. This is our single identity. We are the body of Christ. We are not a building. These buildings are totally extraneous. We have them because we have to come and sit somewhere to hear the Word of God. The Church is not a physical building. We are a spiritual building, as we said, not a physical one. This is not the Church; you are the Church. I am the Church. We are not an organization; we are a *koinōnia*; we are a communion; we are a fellowship of one body: the body of Christ.

Now, this unique metaphor is going to form the basis for our study tonight. And incidentally, in many weeks to come, as we study verse by verse through the book of Ephesians, which is the account reckoning to us the doctrine of the body of Christ.

Now, as we begin, before we go to Ephesians, we want to look at 1 Corinthians chapter 12. And I want you to see three things about the body. Three things. And we’ll explain to you what the body of Christ means. This is strategic, and I want you to really put on your thinking cap and get your brain in gear. Get it out of neutral, if it’s just kind of spinning around, and get with it.

All right, three things I want you to see. Three things that characterize the body, and they are completely detailed in the 12th chapter. They are: number one, unity; number two, diversity; number three, harmony. Unity, diversity, harmony. If you want an I-T-Y ending: mutuality. Unity, diversity, and harmony or mutuality. Now, these are key things for you to understand.

Part of the reason the Church – well, really, the reason the Church is so crippled is because people aren't functioning as the body. Strategic words.

All right, first of all, let's look at unity. The first and incidentally – mark it – the dominant character of a body is its unity. Beginning in 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 12. 1 Corinthians 12:12, "For as the body is one" – and here he's talking about a physical body – "and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."

Now, here Paul takes the physical body and he says, "Folks, you must know that a physical body must be one." You cannot take a physical body and put an arm here, and a leg there, and a head there, and a heart there, and a couple of feet over there and say, "Now, body, go do something." You cannot say to those disconnected members, "Pull yourself together and function." A body is a unit or it does not exist. It must be one. Paul says, "The body is one and has many functioning members."

The physical body.

I cannot say, "You know, my hand is so gifted, I'm going to cut it off and send it over..." Your hand will not be gifted. After you have cut it off, it will die. It has to be attached to the body. So, the essence of a body is unity. Unity. We are one. "So also is Christ." We are, friends, a body. Christ is the Head; we are the body. All the members. We are one. If we detach, we are dead. We cannot be detached. We function as a unit, or we do not function. We are one. And Christ is the Head of the body from which all the instruction comes, all the brain power, all the energy, and all the resources to make every part of the body function.

The head is the life. You can cut off the hand and the arm and the head will maintain the life. And you can cut off parts of the body, and the life is still there. You keep going you'll get to it sooner or later. But if you cut off the head, the life is gone. And the same thing is true in the body of Christ. A perfect analogy. Christ, our Head, is the source of our life.

Ephesians 5:23, Paul said, "Christ is the Head of the Church." Colossians 1:18 he said, "And He is the Head of the body" – comma – "the Church." Christ is the Head. You know, that sounds like a simple thought. But some people think they're the head. They do. They think they're the head of the Church. I know one man that has that very title. He is not the Head of the Church; Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church.

All believers are one in Him. One body. Unity. Receiving all our resources, and all our strength, and all our wisdom, and all our instruction from the same Head.

Now, notice verse 13. Here's how you get into the body. Here's how the body begins, the unity of the body, verse 13, "For by one Spirit" – and I want you to notice how many times the word "one" is used. Back in verse 12, one body, one body – twice. Verse 13, "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body" – that's three times – four times he's already said "one body." Four times in a verse and a line. Do you think he means to emphasize unity here?

"For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free; we have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Listen, we are one. And salvation is the initial point of our unity. We all came by one Spirit into the body. We all came through the one way. Who's that? Jesus Christ. One door. Jesus Christ. We are one in one body because we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body and now have the one same Spirit dwelling within us.

Notice it in verse 13. "By one Spirit were we all baptized into one body." People say, "What is he baptism of the Holy Spirit? The baptism of the Holy Spirit is right here in this verse – clearly this: it is God's Holy Spirit placing a believer into the body of Christ. That's exactly what it says there. "By one Spirit were we all baptized into one body." You came into the body of Christ at the moment of salvation by being placed there by the energy of the Spirit. From the moment you receive Jesus

Christ, my friend, you were a part of that one body, and you were put there by that one same Spirit. Not only were you put there, but verse 13 says, "You also have the same indwelling Spirit." See?

"We've all been made to drink" – that is, assimilate or appropriate – "the one Spirit."

Now, you notice how he's emphasizing our unity? Sure. It's the whole point. He is stressing our unity. We were born of the Spirit, right? We put faith in Jesus Christ; we were born of the Spirit. By the one Spirit, placed into the body of Christ. Right? By being placed in the body of Christ, we were indwelt by the same one Spirit. Right? So, the Spirit redeemed us by faith in Christ. The Spirit actually does the work of regeneration. Doesn't He? The Spirit regenerates us, places us in the body of Christ, comes to indwell us.

You say, "Does every Christian have the Holy Spirit indwelling?" You better believe it. Romans 8:9 says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." There's no such thing as a believer who doesn't have the Holy Spirit. No such thing. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Turn it around, "If you belong to Him, you have the Holy Spirit."

You receive the Holy Spirit. First of all, He regenerated you, placed you in the body, then you received Him. You drank of Him. He came within you. Now – now, you notice how our unity is all wrapped up in the Spirit? See? That's why Paul says in Ephesians 4:3 that we have – quote – are you ready for this? – "the unity of the Spirit." Because it is the same Spirit who regenerates us, baptizes us into the body, and indwells us. Our unity then is not based upon an artificial denominational basis; it is not based upon the fact that we're just all believers in the Christ; it is based on the fact that we have all been identified in the work of one single Spirit.

That's the point of our unity, isn't it? We have one Spirit. He's the same in me as He is in you. Same Spirit. I came to Jesus Christ, believed in Him. I was regenerated by the same Spirit in the same way, placed in the same body by the same Spirit in the same way, indwelt by the same Spirit in the same way as you were. And therefore, our unity is in the Spirit. That's why when a believer operates in the flesh, he operates contrary to the functioning of the body. Because the body must operate in the unity of the Spirit.

Now, there's no other way to get into the body of Christ except to be baptized into the body by the Spirit. And there's only one way to be baptized into the body by the Spirit, and that's to be redeemed by Jesus Christ. We all come one way, by one Savior, through one Spirit, by one salvation. And thus our unity begins. Doesn't it? In the body of Christ, we all came through the blood of Jesus Christ by the Spirit of God.

So, we start out with basic unity. Don't we? Isn't it interesting how once we've all gotten that unity and gotten into the body we all scatter? See? We all came in the same way, experienced the same Spirit, had the same indwelling Spirit, and we're gone. And then we spend all of our ministry trying to get the body back together again to realize their unity. We are one, friends. We are one. There are no such things as super saints. There aren't. Really there aren't.

You know, one minister said this. He said, "The Church is so cold, and the body is so dead, that when somebody arrives with a 98.6, we think the guy is sick. We think he's got a fever. And he's normal. See? Our temperatures are so cold that when a guy comes in with a 98.6, we think the guy's a hothead. He's got a fever. Cool him down; he's running amok.

Listen, to be totally committed to Jesus Christ and totally absorbed in the Spirit's ministry is not to be super; it's to be normal. There are no great people in the body of Christ. Nobody can come in and say, "Well, how did you get here?"

"Well, I did this, and 49 of those, and 74 of those, and I got here."

See? No you didn't. You came by one Spirit into one body just like everybody else did. That's the point of our unity. There's nobody can stand up in the body of Christ and say, "I got here like this. You stay down there." No. We came the same way, and it was by grace, wasn't it? It wasn't works, was it? If it was works, we'd all be boasting, wouldn't we? We are all trophies of grace, brought into the body by the same way. We have nothing to glory in, nothing to boast in, nothing to stand up and

say, "I'm going to lord it over you." And the whole clergy/laity dichotomy is unbiblical. I am not any higher than you except that this platform is – I don't know – 36 inches up. That's the only elevation that I have over you. And if it bothers you, from now on I'll preach down there.

I am not somebody above you, and you are not somebody above somebody else, and you are not somebody below somebody else. We are one. Get that. There is no hierarchy in the New Testament. There are varying gifts, but no hierarchy. If you want an organizational chart of Christianity, it's got Christ at the head, and from then on, it's a big circle. That's all. It's not filtering down. We all came into the body the same way. We are all trophies of God's grace. There is no hierarchy. We are all one.

And you recall this in your mind. Now, just a few minutes ago we presented to you metaphors. Didn't we? Metaphors of the Church. Did you notice how that every single one of them, without exception, emphasizes unity? Did you notice that? Watch this review: We are one wife with one husband. Right? We are one flock with how many shepherds? One Shepherd. We are one set of branches on one Vine. We are one kingdom with one King. We are one family with one Father. We are one building with one Foundation. We are one body with one Head: Jesus Christ. We are one.

The Bible doesn't say the fat branches and the skinny branches or the lamb sheep and the super sheep. The message of the body of Christ is the message of one. We are one. We are one in Christ.

There is no room for hierarchy; there is no room for upper class/lower class. And I'll tell you something else, there's no such thing as an isolated believer. There's no believer who's not a part of the body, who's just sitting over here by himself. You are in the body. You're part of it just as much as I am or anybody else. There are no such things as upper class/lower class Christians. And there are none who are out of the body. You're all in the body.

Just to emphasize your unity, let me read you the catalog of unity. We'll study this in weeks to come. Ephesians 4:4. Listen to this, "There is one body, one Spirit, as you are called, and one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." One, one, one, one, one, one. See?

And I like this, 1 Corinthians, backing up from where we are to chapter 1 just to illustrate this. You know what happened in the body of Christ in Corinth? They got all fractioned up. And they were all going around and saying, "Well, who are you with?"

"Well, I'm an Apollos man myself."

"Oh, Apollos is out. I'm a Paul man."

"Well, you know you guys are both out; Cephas is in. I follow Peter myself."

"Well, listen, folks. I follow Christ." There's always one of those in every crowd. So, they were going on with this kind of a deal, back in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 12, "Now this I say, every one of you saith, 'I'm of Paul;' 'Oh, I'm of Apollos;' 'I'm of Cephas;' 'I'm of Christ.'" See?

Then in verse 13, "Is Christ divided?" See? What kind of stupidity is that? What are you fractioning up the body for? You're not a follower of this or a follower of that. "Is Christ divided?" Now look at chapter 3, verse 21, "Therefore let no man glory in men." You don't go around saying, "Well, I follow him," or, "I follow him," or, "I follow him." You don't glory in that. "For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." He throws it all in there. "And you are Christ's; and" – what? – "Christ is God's."

Will you just get off this division and get back on the oneness? You see, that's a – that's really a potent section in chapter 3 there. He just says everything you think of – things to come, death, life, mmm – it's all yours. You're one. You're one with Christ and Christ with God.

So, Paul emphasizes our oneness. The Church is a people, an assembly of redeemed people who owe their distinct existence, their life together, to the fact that they were by one Spirit put into one body and indwelt by the one same Spirit. We are not separated believers, my friends, we are one.

Your life never ends. Did you know that? It just picks up where mine begins. And the whole body

of Christ just keeps going like that. There's no breaks; it's an endless chain.

We have been called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. We're all a part of His body. You say, "What got us into this thing?" Well, the call of God. We are God's ecclesia from *eklektos*, to call out. We are God's called out ones. Called apart from the world to exist as a separate entity, His body, with Him as the Head.

And we are to lead a life worthy of His calling. Aren't we? So that we may become in character and conduct what we are in status: called apart, saints, separated unto him, his body.

So, the Church then is God's people, called out of the world and separated to exist for Him. One in holiness, one in mission. We all have the same mission. One in suffering and one in glory. We are one.

In Ephesians 2, verse 12 – listen to this – "Student the time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one" – that is Jew and Gentile – "hath broken down the middle wall of partition, abolished in His flesh the enmity" – see? – "and made of two one new man" – see? – "so making peace" – now watch it – "that He might reconcile both unto God in one" – what? – "body by the cross" – see? And then he goes on to say, "For we have access to Him by one Spirit." We are one. "There is neither Jew," – Galatians 3:28 – "Gentile, Greek, slave, free, male, female" – none of those distinctions exist in the Church in terms of our position in the blessing of Christ. This one new man, you see, that's what we are. We are a new man, a new body, the body of Christ. A brand new thing; it's never existed before. And Christ has abolished all barriers to make us one. He's abolished the barriers of nationality, the barriers of race, the barriers of class, the barriers of sex – every single barrier has been abolished to make one new man. And that's a glorious thing. We're one. It doesn't matter who we are; if we love Jesus Christ we're one. Some people can't get this in their mind. They think there are these Christians up here, and then there's those low class ones. That is not so.

So, the days of discrimination are over. The Church that Christ has created, headed by Christ, tolerates no distinctions. None at all. None at all. There are some places, my friend, where you can't preach that message without getting thrown in jail.

In Romans chapter 10, that message is again repeated for us by the apostle Paul in verse 12 and 13, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all them that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

You see, all the barriers are gone. There are no barriers left in Jesus Christ. We are one new man. And as a result, all Christians, whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free man, whatever – uncouth barbarian or educated Greek, whatever the case, we're all fellow citizens.

Paul calls us four things using Greek words that I'm not going to go into right now. He calls us fellow citizens, fellow heirs, fellow members, fellow partakers. Fellow, fellow, fellow, fellow. One, one, one, unity. So, in all the metaphors, unity is emphasized.

And, you know, this is my prayer for this church, that at least this portion of the body of Christ may sense our oneness. I need to hurt when you hurt. You know? And you need to hurt when I hurt. And I need to be sensitive to your needs, and you need to be sensitive to mine. And I need to love you when you need love, and you need to love me when I need love. And I need to exhort you when you need exhortation, and you need to exhort me when I need it.

And when you need rebuke, I need to rebuke you; and when I need rebuke, you need to rebuke me. That goes for everyone but my wife. I don't want her to get carried away. She already does it.

You and I need to function together, sensitive to each other. You do not want to isolate yourself, Christian; you want to get yourself into the mainstream of the life of the body. Did you know that? See, that's what's wrong with so many Christians, man. They come to church on Sunday morning, and come in here and sit down and think, "Well, God, I know you're just really blessed by my being

here.” See?

God’s like, “That’s right; one for you.” See?

And they have no concept of operating in the mainstream of the body life, and so they are a nonfunctioning member, crippling and maiming the body of Christ. And the rest of us are limping along, trying to compensate for their inabilities. You need to be in the mainstream of the body life.

See? Sensitive to me, and I need to be sensitive to you. We are one.

Oh, Jesus, He wanted this. Desperately did He want it. So much so that in John chapter 17 – I just love this chapter; what an insight into the heart of Jesus Christ – listen to Him. He’s praying to His Father. Listen to what He prays for. He could have prayed for a lot of things, but listen to what he prays for. John 17 and verse 20, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word.” In other words, “I’m not just praying for my disciples, I am praying for those who shall believe on Me, through their word in the future.”

Now, what am I going to pray? Verse 21, “That they all may be” – what? – “one;” – see? – “as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee,” – just super sensitive to each other; ah, it’s so beautiful – “that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” You know what will convince the world who Jesus is? When we’re one; that’s what’ll do it. That’s what’ll do it.

“And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one:” – He put His glory in us, didn’t He? That we might be one. And His glory is the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit is our point of unity. Right? We all have the same Spirit; that’s our contact for oneness. “I in them, Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.”

You know when we’re really going to turn this world upside down, when we are really going to shatter the complacency of this world? When we are one. I’ll tell you, if this church ever became one in terms of body life, and ever began to minister to each other’s needs spiritually, and sensed a super sensitive oneness, the world would never be able to cope with what would happen here. Because we would release the unity of the Spirit and all the energy that’s wrapped up in it.

Now you say, “Well, how does this oneness work?” Well, I’ll show you the key. This unity. It’s based on humility. That’s the key. Now, turn with me to Philippians 2, because I want you to see it. Verse – let’s look at verse 2, Philippians 2:2. Now, Jesus prayed that we’d be one. Right? Paul also desired the same thing. And the Philippians evidently hadn’t fulfilled this. So, they can perhaps give us a good example of what we need to hear. Listen to verse 2. Paul says to the Philippians, “Fulfill you my joy,” – my highest joy – “that ye be” – what? – “likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. See? What does Paul want the Philippians to be? One. Just be one. Have the same kind of love. You know, there are different kinds of love. Well, you really love her, and you don’t have her too much, but you can tolerate her. You know, this – have the same love. Be one. Be likeminded, having the same mind.

You say, “What mind is it?” I’ll tell you what mind it is. Look at verse 5, “Let this mind be in you, which was also” – what? – “in Christ Jesus.” What mind are you to have? The mind of Christ. You say, “Well, what is the mind of Christ?” I’ll show you what the mind of Christ is, verse 6, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:” – in other words, something to hold onto – “but made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Now, you know what mind that is? My friend, that is the mind of condescending humility. You see it there? Here is the mind of Christ. He was there; He came and was obedient to death. That is humility. You see? You know how we get to be one? Verse 4, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others.” You know how we get to be one? By being like Jesus and saying, “Look, I don’t care about myself; I just want to get down here, and if it means to suffer, to show my love to you, I’ll suffer.” See? Humility just says, “I don’t care about me; all I care about is

you.” Can you imagine what would happen if all of us went around caring nothing for ourselves and everything for everybody else?

Listen, my friend, you’d get your care. You’d have this whole body caring for you. But most Christians spend so much caring for themselves that nobody else could tolerate to care for them.

Listen, if we ever learn, and by God’s Spirit we can, to just start caring for each other, you would be drowned in care and love. See, that’s the mind of humility. I don’t care about myself. Why should I care about myself? I just want to care about you. No wounded egos. No toes that have been stepped on, “Well, I’m not going over to that thing anymore; I’m not speaking to Mrs. So-and-so.” “That’s the last time for that.” That’s not humility. You know what that is? That’s ego. That’s just ego going *whstt* rising to the top. The mind of humility was a mind of Christ.

Listen, Christ never – he never tired to maintain His ego When He got here. They spit on Him; He just stood there. They nailed Him to a cross; He just hung there. He didn’t say, “You can’t do this to Me; I won’t tolerate it.” See, the mind of humility says if this means your salvation and your – if this means that you can have something, if this means you’re benefit and your blessing, I’ll suffer, because I only care about you. You know, that’s kind of a foreign thing, isn’t it? Sadly. But that’s what the body concept is all about, folks; it’s all about caring for somebody else and not caring for yourself.

Did you know that? That’s what it’s all about.

In Romans 12:3, listen to what Paul says, “For I say, through the grace that is given to me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” “For as we have many members in one body.” See? We’re all in the body of Christ. How do we get our unity? By not thinking about me but you. You don’t need to worry about your own ego. You don’t need to worry about your own little problems. You don’t need to be so self-directed in all of your thoughts that it’s always you. Just start reaching out and touching somebody’s life and forget about yourself.

We are one. The point of contact for our unity must be humility. You say, “Well, how far does it go?” I mean you could get trampled. So, get trampled. Get trampled. You think God can restore you? Yeah.

First Corinthians 6 – this is really going to get you. I hope none of you are in litigation at this point. 1 Corinthians chapter 6, you’re about to get devastated. 1 Corinthians 6, verse 7 and 8 – I love it; I love it. Paul here is condemning a Christian who sues another Christian. You know, goes to court and hassles publically with them. Listen to this, verse 7, 1 Corinthians 6, “Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because you go to law one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong?” Just take it.

You say, “But you don’t know how much it was.” Take it. “Why do you not rather allow yourselves to be defrauded?” “Allow myself to be defrauded?”

“Nay, you do wrong, and defraud, and that your brother.” Take it. Just take it. Just learn to care and care so much that you could care less what happened to you. And do you want to know something? Some brother may defraud you, but some other brother’s going to pick you up. Because a giving person and a loving person receives what he gives and gets back the love that he gives away.

Christ is our Head, we are the body, and we are to minister to each other in love. Now, humility is the key. If there’s a second key, an equal key – we will not say that these are unequal but equal – the second key, equal to humility and completely detached, and they both overlap, is love. Is love. And there’s a verse that is so exciting, John 13:34 Jesus says this, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye” – what? – “love one another.”

Now you see, what does love mean? Love means, “Well, I like so-and-so until he does me wrong.” No, no, no. See, love doesn’t care what happens. Love is uncircumstantial. Love just splatters out on anybody; it doesn’t matter what they do. See? That’s love. Love doesn’t pick and choose. Love is just there, and whoever gets in the way gets loved. See? And it doesn’t matter what they do.

You know, I always like this: people say, “Well, I love her in the Lord,” which is like saying, “I hate her.” Same thing, right? You know, as if you had a little valve, and you could say, “I’m going to squirt you with eight drops of divine love, unmixed with my own,” and shut it off. You can’t love somebody in the Lord. You either love them or you don’t.

And Jesus said, “This is not an option, folks. This is a new” – what? – “commandment.”

You says, “Well, how could He command it? We don’t have the capacity.” Oh, yes. “The love of Christ is shed abroad” – where? – “in your heart,” Romans 5:5-8. “Okay, a new commandment I give you, that you love one another” – how? – “as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” And watch this one, “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one to another.”

You know how to convince the world that Jesus is for real and that we really love Him? Just start loving one another. Listen, the greatest evangelism in the world is not going out necessarily or having a big revival. The greatest evangelism in the world is so much love that the world can’t figure it out.

Oh, listen; if the principle that brings our unity is humility, the mark of our unity is love. Isn’t it? Love. Paul said to those Thessalonians, he said, “O, the Lord make you to increase and abound in love toward one another.”

John said, “This is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that ye should love one another.” Do you really love? I mean do you love like Christ loved, or are you so protective of your ego that every time something goes wrong, you retaliate and you react and you get bitter? And if everything isn’t like you like it, and if the Church isn’t like you like it, and if Sister So-and-so or Brother So-and-so – is that the kind of person you are, or are you just a kind of loving person, and it doesn’t matter what the circumstances, your love just gushes, and whatever’s out there gets it.

Listen, we are one. And the principle of our oneness is humility and the mark of our oneness is love. The kind of love that humbles. You know? The kind of love that goes to his brother and says, “Brother, I have had a bitterness against you, and I want to ask you to forgive me, and I want to begin to love you.” That’s the kind of love it is. And then it’s the kind of love that says, “Brother, I forgive you.” And it’s the kind of love that says, “Hey, I’m sorry, brother; I’m sorry.” It’s the kind of love that doesn’t criticize others to build up itself. And it’s the kind of love that loves no matter what it costs: money, prestige, position – doesn’t matter. Our oneness will rise and fall on our humility and love.

And let me say it this way. If you have anything but love for any single believer, before the body of Christ is ever going to be healthy, you’re going to have to pray to God, repent, and confess, and go to that believer and make it right.

Listen, we must have your love. That’s right – you. Every one. We must have your love for the unity of the body. We’ll never have it without yours. We have unity positionally; we’ve got to have it in practice or the world – they’re never going to know. And we’re not going to experience the joy of the body life. And so, we are one. Let’s practice our positional oneness.

The second thing about the body. Let’s go back to 1 Corinthians 12 for a minute. If the first aspect of the body is unity, the second aspect is diversity. Diversity. We’re one, and yet we’re many. Now, verse 14 of 1 Corinthians 12, “For the body is not one member, but” – what? – “many.” All right, unity is our base; diversity is our operation, isn’t it? Sure, the body’s one, and yet there are arms and fingers and all various parts, and ears and eyes, and all of the various members of the body, each with a unique function operating distinctly and yet as one. Verse 14 says the body is many members. There is diversity with the body. You know, we’re all different, aren’t we? We’re all different, Romans 12. We’ve been given different gifts, and the measure of faith to go with the gift. In other words, if

God gives you a spiritual gift, He gives you the amount of faith to operate it. Doesn’t he?

Can you imagine what’d happen if God gave you a particular gift and then not the faith to operate it. It’d be frustrating. Or if God gave you too much faith for the measure of the gift that He gave you. So, God matches the measure of faith with the gift so that you always have the exact amount of faith

to operate the right gift.

All right, these are going to be brief. We'll just mention them to you. But the diversity is important. We all have distinct gifts. We'll talk about the gifts of the Spirit as we get into Ephesians. So, we won't belabor the point. But looking at verse 4 of this chapter, let me just read them to you. "Now there are diversities of gifts. Now, these aren't talents, friends. These aren't innate abilities; these are Spirit-given gifts. When you become a Christian, God, through His Spirit, gives you a specific gift. Watch them. These are Spirit-given, divine gifts that you have. There are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit.

Now, you see, the body needs this, right? We've got to all complement each other. We all can't be everything – right? – so, I can do one thing; you can do one thing; somebody else can do another thing. And we minister to each other, don't we? See? For the health of the body. Any organ doesn't function maims and cripples the body.

All right, so, there are diversities of gifts with the same Spirit. There are differences of administrations of the same Lord. There are diversities of operation but the same God. See how it's diversity and unity? All right.

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom." There's a gift; some people have wisdom.

To another the word of knowledge. Some people are learned; they know the Word of God. To another faith. Did you know that faith is a Spirit-given gift? Some people have that gift; some people don't. Now, all of us have faith to believe God, but some have the gift of faith, which is faith beyond the normal kind of faith.

To another the gift of healing by the same Spirit. To another the working of miracles. To another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another various kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. And, of course, if you study carefully the Word of God, you'll find out that there are all kinds of other gifts mentioned in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 as well. Some of them are temporary, some of them are permanent, some of them are for the unbeliever, and some of them for the edification of the body. We won't get into all of that.

But basically, there are diversity of gifts. Verse 11, "But all these work that one and the very same Spirit" – see? – dividing to every man severally as He will."

So, in order to allow for functioning in the body so that we can all minister to each other, and I can work with you, and I can be to you what you can't be, I can instruct you, and you can perhaps do something – operating another gift for me, we can all work together. The Spirit has divided up the gifts in beautiful balance. And I'll put it simple: if you're not using your gift, somebody's getting cheated.

Ephesians tells us that even the diversity of gifts make for unity. You know that? Listen to this; Ephesians 4:11, "He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastor teachers" – all these gifts – "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body" – watch this – "till we all come unto the unity of the faith." You see, the diversity of gifts brings unity.

You say, "How?" Well, because as we all minister to each other, as all of us are being ministered to and ministering our gifts in a perfect exchange, we're all together maturing. Aren't we? And the full complement of gifts is being bestowed upon every member. Do you see? So, we're coming together. Because if you're ministering to me, and I'm ministering to you, and together we're ministering the gifts that God's given us, we're all together growing into one perfect, mature body.

And so, diversity is so important. Your spiritual gifts are a sovereign, God-given blessing, and you must operate them. You say, "Well, I applied to the Sunday school; they don't need a third-grade teacher."

Bless your heart. I don't know if we need a third-grade teacher; I don't really care, in your case. You know why? Because of this: the Bible doesn't say, "Find an organization and assign your gift to it." It doesn't say that. If you have a spiritual gift, operate it. You say, "There aren't any openings."

Oh, yes there are. If you have the gift of helps, go help somebody. You don't need the church organization; go do it.

If you have the gift of teaching, go find a class and teach it. If it's a class of one, two, in your neighborhood, go find somebody that needs to be taught. If you have the gift of evangelism, go find somebody that doesn't know Jesus Christ and evangelize them. You don't need the church organization. So many people sit around. They've got spiritual gifts that the body of Christ is just craving. And somebody needs you to minister to them. Don't wait for the organization to fit you in the slot; go find somebody and minister your gift. And I'll clue you, if you can't find somebody to minister your gift to, then you're probably not in the mainstream of the body life to begin with. We need your gift to be ministered. The Spirit didn't give it to you to stick it on a shelf.

You say, "Well, I don't even know my gift." Then find out. How? Read the list of gifts in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. Find out the one that is yours by prayer and by studying the gifts and determining what you like to do and what you do with the Spirit's blessing and a measure of success. Now, you know you don't have the gift of pastor teacher, if you're a woman. So, that eliminates that.

Secondly, you know you don't have the gift of evangelism if you can't stand to get up in front of people and speak, at least on a large scale. If you love to work with people, maybe you have the gift of helps. If you're a great organizer, maybe you have the gift of administration or ruling. Whatever it is, you read them over. You discover them, and I'll promise you, if you're honest and you want to know, the Holy Spirit will show you.

And then don't worry about this church. Don't worry about Grace Community Church. You go find somebody that needs to be ministered to and minister to them. And when I meet a Christian, and he'll start talking to me, and I'll say maybe something like, "You know, we've got a needs in our church, could you help us," and you say, "Gee, I'd love to help you, but listen, I am too busy; I've got this class over here, and I'm working with so-and-so," and I says, "Terrific." You know, "Go on, get out of here." See?

You don't need this organization to minister your gift. If you do, you're just leaning on a crutch. Oh, listen; you that are working here, this is where God has you, use your gift. But if you can't find an opening, if there's not a place as far as you know in the structure, just go and minister to somebody. Go teach somebody. Go find somebody who wants to know. You say, "Where are they?" This church right tonight is full of people who need to know the Word of God. You could probably strike up an acquaintance, go home with somebody, meet them on a daytime, and just sit down and teach them some things. There are so many new Christians in this church that need to learn. Find a ministry.

If your ministry is the ministry of compassion, caring for people, go visit some sick people. We have a list of them. Call the office. Go find them. Don't wait for the structure; minister your gift. As the kids say, get it on. Fast.

Point three, harmony. The last thing that the body must have is harmony. We're all ministering our gifts, and yet it's got to blend, doesn't it? I love this. This is so good. Verse 15. If there's not harmony in a body, it's ridiculous. "If the foot shall say, 'Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body;' is it therefore not of the body?" Of course not. "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?"

You know, the idea of insignificance. Well, I'm so insignificant I don't even belong in this situation. That's not true; you have a function.

Verse 17, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?" You know, a lot of people, "Well, if I was only an eye, I'd really operate; I'm just a foot." So, Paul says, "If the whole body was an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling?" See? There's got to be diversity. There's no place for envy or jealousy, because there's no hierarchy. You don't need to envy somebody else's gifts. God's given you yours; they are as absolutely, 100 percent critical to the life of the body as mine or anybody else's gifts.

And then in verse 18, “But God hath set the members.” God knows what He’s doing. See? “Every one of them in the body as it pleased Him.” He’s got a master plan for unity. “And if they were all one member, where were the body?” Why? Everybody can’t do the same thing, discover your gift and use it. We’re all part of the same body. We have different things to do.

Then humility is the key, verse 21, “And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you;’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you, feet.’”

You see, this is the idea of lording it over. See? “You know, you’re just – you’re nothing; you down there, I’m the head. See?”

And then I like verse 22, “Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary.” In other words, you know, the idea is like this: Somebody says, “Well, I’m the nose.” “Really beautiful, makes for nice looking.” And the real thing, the most important thing is not to notice it’s the feet that gets you somewhere. You’d be better off to have an injured nose than crippled feet. That’s what he’s saying right here. You know, the ones who are always saying, “Well, we’re the public ones. See? We’re the ones that everyone sees.”

And he says, “Wait a minute, it’s the stuff going on in the background that may be really the necessity.” I’ll tell you, you learn that in the ministry. I see people coming to Christ in our services, and I go into the situation of people coming to Christ, and you know what I discover? Somebody’s been working with them. Some feet or some hands in the body have been laboring just because I happen to be the mouth who stands up and gets the preeminence. That doesn’t prove anything. My gift is not one white more significant than yours. In fact, it may be less necessary than yours.

“And those members” – verse 23 – “of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.”

See, you know, the parts that aren’t so handsome and fancy, they’re the ones that are really doing the job. It really takes the stuffing out of somebody who stands up and says, “Well, I’m really the beautiful part of the body.” See?

Verse 24, “For our comely parts have no need” – what do they do? just look good? – “but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacketh.” Those internal organs that are ugly, that are not pretty at all, they are the essence of life. It’s not just the visible, beautiful things. It’s that part that does the work, that’s not anything to look at, but functions to keep life in the body. And, you know, we’ve got to be sure we don’t get this kind of a dichotomy – don’t we? – where we say, “Well, we’re the fancy parts, and you’re just this.” No, sir.

Verse 25, don’t do it, “That there should be no schism in the body” – no division – “but that the members should have the same” – what? – “care one for another.” There’s no difference. See? No difference. “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you’re the body of Christ” – unity – “and members in particular.”

Diversity. Now, harmonize; don’t set a hierarchy. See?

Well, we’ve got to be a healthy body, folks. We’ve got to be. We must be healthy, and we need you. We don’t need more structural unity. We don’t need more organization. We need more body unity, more body ministry. That’s what Jesus prayed for. Let’s answer His prayer.

Our unity is the unity of the Spirit, not the unity of the denomination, or the church, or the organization. And there will be true spiritual unity when we humble ourselves, when we look every man on the things of others, when we love with a love that could care less what happens to us. And when we begin to minister in harmony our spiritual gifts to each other.

Oh, I pray, God, every day that this will be the case here, and that the world will look at us and say, “Yes, Jesus is real. We can tell because of their love.” Father, we thank You tonight for these words. We’ve abbreviated them somewhat, Lord, but You know. You know the truths. And thank You for teaching us about the body. What a glorious truth it is. Thank you for Jesus, who is our Head, from whom surges the power and the resource and the wisdom and the impulse into this body.

Oh, God, teach us to operate. Teach us to function. Help us to just go out and find somewhere to

minister our gift that we might really begin to work for You, for the health of the body that we might be so united, that we might set a torch that'll flame across the world.

While your heads are bowed for just a moment, as we close our service, I want to just have a moment of silent prayer, and I want you to just pray a short prayer with me, something like this, "Christ, I recognize my place in the body. I want three things. Number one, Christ, teach me to be humble. Number two, teach me to love. Number three, show me my gift; teach me to use it." Will you pray that prayer? "Teach me to be humble, to love, to know my gift and use it." You may have more than one. Most Christians do. Oh, pray that prayer right now.

I trust that you did. And I know that the Spirit of God will honor your prayer. We need you. Desperately the body needs you to operate, to be sensitive. I need you. We must work together whatever the cost, caring for each other as one. That's what Jesus prayed for; that's what we want for His glory.

Our Father, we pray that You'll really embed these truths in our minds, that we might indeed be one. Teach us to be one. Soften our hard hearts and make us one in the Spirit. We pray in Christ's name, amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2023 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).