

One Body, Many Members
1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Intro

Complexity of human body -- 37.2 trillion cells; skeletal system - supports the body; muscular system - enables movement; nervous system activates bodily responses - each of these made up of multiple organs and tissues working together

[12] **even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.**

[13] **For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.**

[14] **I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.**

(Psalm 139:12-14)

The worshiper realizes that, even before his mother knew she was pregnant, the Lord was already showing his care for him (ESV Study Bible)

The horror of on-demand abortion - pray, struggle in the public sphere, support ministries that help moms who chose to have babies in difficult situations.

Just as God designed the rich complexity of the human body - he has designed that the church look and function a certain way - as the body of Christ

Let us embrace the gifts God has given us, ask him for more, and use these gifts to build up this church

I. Our Entrance Into the Body

- A. Presented w/ the complexity of the human body as an analogy to the spiritual body of Christ - many members (parts, organs) in the body united as one - so it is with Christ's body
- B. Paul describes what it means to become a Christian - two pictures
 - 1. Verse 13 - in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body
 - a) Not a reference to water baptism - the Spirit draws us, applies the gospel, gives the gift of faith (grace) - we trust in Christ - the Holy Spirit "soaks" us thoroughly in the graces of salvation - the Spirit is the means through which every Christian is brought into Christ
 - 2. Verse 13b - all were made to drink of one Spirit
 - a) Not a reference to a "second blessing" of the Spirit - Paul is adding another picture - there are second, third, many experiences of the Spirit that we ask for and pursue but that is not Paul's concern here - "we ALL"
 - (1) Through faith in Christ we drink of living water

[37] On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" [39] Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)

3. Through the cross - wrath-bearing substitute - dying in our place - gloriously raised - we believe on Christ and receive spiritual life
4. Our text points us to something even more - fundamental, radical, positional change in our universe - from wandering, lost, alone to united with other in Christ. Transcendent, staggering, no small thing
 - a) Not a group of people with similar interests - We gather this morning as the body of Christ!

Ex. After I got baptized - man says to me "welcome to the club" - trite - welcome to a universe of glory!

C. Application

1. We aren't solo - we are individuals but in Christ we are collectively his body - not just "me and Jesus" it is "us in Jesus"
2. CALL TO UNBELIEVERS
3. Christian be encouraged by the grace of God
 - a) Weak conscience, struggling to believe God's love for you - he loves you so much he has brought into himself - into his very heart.
 - b) He wants you near! WHY WOULD HE? Grace

II. Our Assignment in the Body

- A. Verse 14 Paul explains how this body works - He discusses the unique assignment/gifting that God has given to each member of the body - talking feet and ears like a Pixar movie - vivid
 1. A foot can't decide it doesn't belong to a body because it isn't a hand, the ear can't decide it doesn't belong to a body because it isn't an eye.
 - a) Thinking this way is dumb because as he says twice - it doesn't make that member any less of part of the body if they think that way
 2. Just as each part of the body is important and the body is impoverished by loss of limbs, organs, so forth - just so, each in person in the body of Christ is important
 3. Your identity in Christ is wrapped up in being a part of His body, the church. Our change in reality comes with an assignment / a role in his church - To be ignorant of or not accept your assignment, your role is to not deal with reality - you still are who God made you to be but are chasing to ignore/not function
 - a) We are called to understand and embrace our role - for the glory of God and the good of his church

4. If everyone was the same we couldn't be the effective church God wants us to be / made us to be
 - a) God himself as made the arrangements (18)
 - (1) Align ourselves with him - his will

B. Application

1. It is important for us to understand what our gifts are / assignment in Christ's body - the role he would have us play - to discover the various ways that God has gifted each one of us - everyone is needed and important
 - a) Insecure - I don't have anything to offer - I'm not a preacher, I'm not a CG leader - O friend - you have a role to play in this church - we need you!
 - (1) Hanging out on the fringes...
2. Discovering your gifts
 - a) Read 1 Cor. 12-14, Rom. 12, Ephesians 4
 - b) Pray
 - c) Try out ministries (risk/sacrifice) - serve
 - (1) Pre-meeting prayer
 - (2) Pray for someone who is sick
 - (3) Be at the top of the list for making meals - ask you CG for ways to serve him
 - (4) Contact office and find areas of need
 - (5) Outreach - maybe you aren't good at sharing the gospel but you make a mean casserole - work together - body
 - d) Ask those who know you best, folks in your CG - "what gifts do you see" - be humble, prepare yourself to maybe hear something you wouldn't prefer - accept who God made you to be!
 - (1) I wish I had a different gift, I wish I could play a different role
 - (a) Different seasons - me doing set-up
 - (b) Rest in God's will - step into the gifts he's give you - he made you who he wants you to be!

[3] For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. (Romans 12:3)

III. Unity in the Body

- A. Having exhorted Corinthians to embrace who God has made them to be - unique assignment / role in the church - without insecurity - he addresses another problem - spiritual elitism
- B. Verse 21 - gifting is not about spiritual tiers - the kind of haughty attitude that looks down on others is repulsive
- C. Verse 22-23 he presents us with the upside down kingdom of God

Ex. In our day - always been so - the brash, the loud, the forceful rise to the top (our current political situation - Lord have mercy!)

1. In the church - weaker people are indispensable, less honor - we bestow greater honor - unrepresentable (Paul was likely referring to sexual organs) - covered over

For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? (1 Corinthians 4:7)

2. Why? Verses 24-25 Because God is composing his body this way - it's counterintuitive - it's a culture of grace, respect, honor, love

Illustration: God is composing a symphony of grace - Treble clefs, tiny breath marks, all are needed. He's painting a portrait of his grace - mixing the paints just right

3. He honors what others despise - we must as well

[26] For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. [27] But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; [28] God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, [29] so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

4. The result is that those things which cause division - superiority complexes, cliques, inner circle are removed and unity thrives

D. We need each other - unity is essential and a beautiful blessing

1. God intends that our unity be so alive that v. 26 we experience each other sorrows and joys.

Illustration: My broken tooth - pain affected me all over - mind, sleep, head, back ache

2. That stabbing internal pain you feel when you hear of someone in the church getting sick - the applause that breaks out when a testimony is given - God has ordained we are interconnected - no-one more important than anyone else

E. Application

1. Avoiding people who are weak - suffering - difficult
 - a) Gospel makes us very humble - softens us to move towards the weak, the struggling

2. If you aren't suffering / rejoicing with others:

- a) You don't know others

(1) CG / Sunday morning attendance, participation

In a land still heavily influenced by a heritage of rugged individualism, believers need to work ever harder to demonstrate that Christianity is not a merely personal religion but fundamentally corporate. Even evangelical language for conversion betrays this bias: a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ." That is the necessary starting point, but we dare

not stop until that relationship leads to intimate interpersonal relationships with other Christians. (Craig Blomberg, *NIVAC: 1 Corinthians*, p. 254)

- b) Bitterness has taken root
 - (1) Remember how much you've been forgiven, embrace your identity as part of the body, repent and throw yourself into community
- 3. Unity at Living Hope - praise God!
- 4. Servants - Set-up team, ushers, children's ministry, CG Leaders, Bi-Vo Elders - Feel the smile of God

IV. Diversity in the Body

- A. Verse 27 - Paul has settled the matter - we are united together in the body of Christ - we are united and there is wonderful diversity in this unity
- B. Paul revisits many of the gifts from verses 8-10 - lays them down over the grid of the body of Christ
 - 1. First three apostles, prophets, teachers - appear to be foundational functions for the church and are given a kind of priority
 - 2. Notice he lumps together - miracles, healing, with helping, administration. 28-30 - do all have...? rhetorical - of course not
 - a) This flies in the face of anyone thinking that one particular gift is present in every Christian as the evidence of the work of the Spirit (tongues, saying banana backwards)
 - b) Do all? No, but some do - maybe many do
- C. Verse 31 earnestly desire the higher gifts - we will see in due time that the higher gifts that edify the church.
 - 1. Can't really be saying that there are spiritual tiers - he just spent the second half of this chapter de-bunking spiritual elitism
- D. Application
 - 1. Are you applying yet - are you praying - positioning yourself as "earnestly desiring"
 - a) Discover the gifts that God has given you - function in them - serve, practice - but ask for more!
 - b) Pray for God to let down your defenses, presuppositions - hold onto the Bible but don't hide behind it
 - 2. Don't put your gift on someone else - celebrate diversity
 - a) Gift of helping giving the teacher a hard time
 - b) Evangelist giving the mercy gal a hard time

3. African Americans, Latino, Asian, etc. - we are grateful you are here - to the extent that we are ethnically diverse - to that extent we will look more like heaven - every tribe, tongue, nations praising the lamb who was slain

Close

Let us embrace the gifts God has given us, ask him for more, and use these gifts to build up this church

We are in this together. That's a good thing. Let's live in the glorious reality of being the body of Christ.

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