

## 1 CORINTHIANS 12 | *One Body, Many Gifts*

### *The Test of True Spirituality*

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts (τῶν πνευματικῶν), brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says Jesus is accursed! and no one can say Lord Jesus (Κύριος Ἰησοῦς) except in the Holy Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ).

### *Manifestations of the Spirit for the Common Good*

4 Now there are varieties (διαίρεσις) of gifts (χαρισμάτων), but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries (διακονιῶν), but the same Lord [Jesus]. 6 And there are varieties of activities (ἐνεργημάτων), but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation (φανέρωσις) of the Spirit for the common good (πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον). 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom (λόγος σοφίας), and to another the utterance of knowledge (λόγος γνώσεως) according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith (πίστις) by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing (χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων) by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles (ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων), to another prophecy (προφητεία), to another the ability to distinguish between spirits (διακρίσεις πνευμάτων), to another kinds of [foreign] languages (γένη γλωσσῶν), to another translation of [foreign] languages (ἐρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν). 11 All these are empowered (ἐνεργέω) by one and the same Spirit, who apportions (διαιρέω) to each one individually as he wishes (βούλομαι).

### *One Body*

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Messiah. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized (βαπτίζω, aor.) into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

### *Many Members*

14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged (τίθημι, aor.) the members in the body, each one of them, as he desired (θέλω, aor.). 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

### *No Division in the Body*

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed (συγκεράννυμι, aor.) the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division (σχίσμα) in the body, but that the members may have the same care (μεριμνάω, pres.) for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all the members co-suffer. If one member is honored, all the members co-rejoice.

### *Strive for the Greater Gifts*

27 Now you are the body of Messiah and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed (τίθημι, aor.) in the church first apostles (ἀποστόλους), second prophets (προφήτας), third teachers (διδασκάλους), then miracles (δυνάμεις), then gifts of healing (χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων), helpings (ἀντιλήμψεις), administrations (κυβερνήσεις), and kinds of [foreign] languages (γένη γλωσσῶν). 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in [foreign] languages? Do all translate? 31 But strive for (ζηλόω, pres.) the greater/more valuable gifts (τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα).

## Commentary

### 1. The Test of True Spirituality (1 Co 12:1-3).

- a. **1 Co 12:1-3** 1 Now concerning the spiritual ones (τῶν πνευματικῶν), brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans (ἔθνη) you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says Jesus is accursed! And no one can say Lord Jesus (Κύριος Ἰησοῦς) except in the Holy Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ).
  - b. Paul wants the Corinthians to be informed about who is truly “spiritual” (v. 1).
    - (1) τῶν πνευματικῶν: “τὰ πν. *spiritual gifts* **1 Cor 12:1** (the gen. here may also be masc. *those who possess spiritual gifts*)” (BDAG, 837).
    - (2) Many people today claim to be “spiritual” in some way (e.g., eastern religions, new spirituality, new age, pantheism, Deepak Chopra, Oprah). Are they? What is the objective criteria of true spirituality? How do we differentiate the true from the false? “Not everything that glitters is gold.”
  - c. Before they became Christians, the Corinthians were led astray in the beliefs and practices of various pagan religions (v. 2).
    - (1) These beliefs and practices were idolatrous and demonic by nature.
      - (a) **1 Co 10:20** 20 No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.
    - (2) For Paul, there is no question of syncretising Greco-Roman religion and Christianity.
    - (3) Non-Christian (pagan) spirituality always leads people away from the true God, the God of the Bible.
    - (4) Corinth was a self- and experience-oriented city. Mystery religions and pagan cults abounded. Ecstatic, emotional, religious experiences were common. There were “inspired” utterances that came from sources other than the Holy Spirit
      - (a) In classical Greek literature, Apollo was renowned as the source of ecstatic utterances, as on the lips of Cassandra of Troy, the priestess of Delphi, or the Sibyl of Cumae (whose frenzy as she prophesied under the god’s control is vividly described by Virgil). The fortune-telling slave-girl of Ac 16:16 was dominated by the same kind of spirit.
    - (5) The Corinthians were still influenced by their past, especially by the ecstatic experiences of the Dionysian mystery and the religion of Apollo. Probably some Corinthians had spoken in glossolalia as pagans. It was easy for them to continue the practice with now a Christian flavour.
    - (6) How do we know when so-called religious activity is genuinely from God? There is a negative criterion, and a positive criterion.
  - d. No one in the Holy Spirit can say, “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord!” except in the Holy Spirit (v. 3).
    - (1) It is content, not manner or experience, that determines authentic spirituality.
    - (2) If the content is unknown, as in the case of glossolalia, we must err on the side of caution and reject a phenomenon or experience as not of the Holy Spirit.
    - (3) Every so-called prophet must be verified objectively, by content and sign.

- (a) **Dt 13:1-5** 1 If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, Let us go after other gods which you have not known, and let us serve them, 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For Yahweh your God is testing you, to know whether you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 You shall walk after Yahweh your God, fear him, keep his commandments, and obey his voice [Scripture], and you shall serve him and hold fast to him. 5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which Yahweh your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.
- (b) **Dt 18:21-22** 21 And if you say in your heart, How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?— 22 when a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that Yahweh has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.
- (4) The Holy Spirit's function is to honour the Son, not himself.
- (a) **Jn 15:26** 26 ...When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will testify about me.
- (b) "The ultimate criterion of the Spirit's activity is the exaltation of Jesus as Lord. Whatever takes away from that, even if they be legitimate expressions of the Spirit, begins to move away from Christ to a more pagan fascination with spiritual activity as an end in itself."<sup>1</sup>
- (5) "Jesus is Lord," that is, "Jesus is Yahweh," is the fundamental Christian confession or creed. Any "spirituality" not in line with this creed is errant spirituality. In other words, what a person specifically believes and confesses about Jesus is all-important. We are not spiritual if we "feel" spiritual. We are spiritual only when we believe Jesus is the Lord of heaven and earth, Yahweh in the flesh, the one and only Son of God.
- (a) **Mt 10:32** 32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven....
- (b) **Mt 16:16** 16 Simon Peter replied, You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.
- (c) **Ro 10:9** 9 ...If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord [Yahweh] and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
- (d) **Php 2:11** 11 ...And every tongue confess that Jesus Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## 2. Manifestations of the Spirit for the Common Good (1 Co 12:4-11).

- a. **1 Co 12:4-11** 4 Now there are varieties (διαίρεσις) of gifts (χαρισμάτων), but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries (διακονιῶν), but the same Lord

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Fee, *The First...*, 582.

[Jesus]. 6 And there are varieties of impacts (ἐνεργημάτων), but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation (φανέρωσις) of the Spirit for the common good (πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον). 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom (λόγος σοφίας), and to another the utterance of knowledge (λόγος γνώσεως) according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith (πίστις) by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing (χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων) by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles (ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων), to another prophecy (προφητεία), to another the ability to distinguish between spirits (διακρίσεις πνευμάτων), to another kinds of [foreign] languages (γένη γλωσσῶν), to another translation of [foreign] languages (ἐρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν). 11 All these are empowered (ἐνεργέω) by one and the same Spirit, who apportions (διαιρέω) to each one individually as he wishes (βούλομαι).

- b. In the church, there are varieties (διαίρεσις):
- (1) Of gifts (χαρισμάτων), but the same Spirit (v. 4).
    - (a) χαρισμάτων: “that which is freely and graciously given, *favor bestowed, gift...* gener., the earthly goods bestowed by God...of special gifts of a non-material sort, bestowed through God’s generosity on individual Christians” (BDAG, 1081).
    - (2) Of ministries (διακονιῶν), but the same Lord [Jesus] (v. 5).
      - (a) διακονιῶν: “service rendered in an intermediary capacity, *mediation, assignment...performance of a service...specif. engagement in preparations for a social event, such as a meal...functioning in the interest of a larger public, service, office* of the prophets and apostles...rendering of specific assistance, *aid, support...* an administrative function, *service* as attendant, aide, or assistant” (BDAG, 230).
      - (b) Two believers may have the same gift, but God will give them different ministries.
    - (3) Of impacts (ἐνεργημάτων), but the same God empowering them (v. 6).
      - (a) ἐνεργημάτων: “activity as expression of capability, *activity...activity as someth. that impacts on another, experience*” (BDAG, 335).
      - (b) Two believers may have the same gift, but God gives them different impacts.
      - (c) In our doctrine, there is no diversity or variety. In our gifts, ministries, and impacts, there is much diversity and variety.
      - (d) “It is God who is responsible for our abilities, our opportunities for service, and the individual ways in which we minister including the results.”<sup>2</sup>
  - c. Each believer is given the manifestation (φανέρωσις) of the Spirit for the common good (πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον) (v. 7):
    - (a) φανέρωσις: “disclosure, announcement” (BDAG, 1048-49).
    - (b) συμφέρω: “to be advantageous, help, confer a benefit, be profitable/useful” (BDAG, 960).
    - (c) The varieties of gifts, ministries, and impacts, all working in concert, demonstrate the Spirit’s presence.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 225.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 225.

- (d) By definition, spiritual gifts are for the common good, not individual aggrandisement. When spiritual gifts are truly exercised, they benefit more than just one person.
- 1) This is why speaking in tongues as a personal private prayer language cannot be considered a spiritual gift. It may be something else, but it is not a spiritual gift.
- (2) The word of wisdom (λόγος σοφίας) through the Spirit (v. 8a).
- (a) Paul's list is representative, not exhaustive.
  - (b) Wisdom may refer to skilfully applying Scripture to solve real-life problems in the church or in another believer's life. It seems to correspond to the third step in inductive Bible study—application.
- (3) The word of knowledge (λόγος γνώσεως) according to the same Spirit (v. 8b).
- (a) Knowledge may refer to accurately interpreting Scripture across the whole of biblical theology. It seems to correspond to the second step of inductive Bible study—interpretation.
- (4) Faith (πίστις) by the same Spirit (v. 9a).
- (a) This is a God-given ability to trust God to a high degree. Many great missionary heroes (e.g., George Mueller, Hudson Taylor, Brother Andrew) seem to have been granted this gift.
- (5) Gifts of healing (χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων) by the one Spirit (v. 9b).
- (a) This is a God-given ability to heal people mentally, emotionally, physically, and/or spiritually.
  - (b) There is no reason it cannot include healing through medicine and miraculous healing.
- (6) The working of miracles (ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων) (v. 10a).
- (a) Mighty works outside the course of natural cause and effect.
- (7) Prophecy (v. 10b).
- (a) προφητεία: “act of interpreting divine will or purpose, *prophetic activity*...the gift of interpreting divine will or purpose, *gift of prophesying*.... Of Christians Ro 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10; 13:2, 8 v.l.; 14:22. The pl. of various kinds and grades of prophetic gifts 13:8; 1 Th 5:20 (here mng. 3b is also prob.)...the utterance of one who interprets divine will or purpose, *prophecy*...of OT inspired statement...of inspired statements by Christian prophets ἐν προφητείᾳ *in the form of a prophetic saying*” (BDAG, 889-890).
  - (b) We should distinguish between Prophets and prophets (just as we distinguish between Apostles and apostles)
    - 1) Prophets no longer exist. There is no new revelation from God, now that the biblical canon is closed. Apostles and Prophets established the church in the first century. Once the church was established, the need for Apostles and Prophets, and new special revelation through them, ended.
      - a) **Jud 3 3** Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.
    - 2) However, a gift of prophecy, that is, encouragement, is arguably still present.

- a) **1 Co 11:4-5** 4 Every man who prays or *prophesies* with his head covered dishonours his head, 5 but every wife who prays or *prophesies* with her head uncovered dishonours her head, because it is the same as if her head were shaven.
- (1) There are few Prophets, but there are many who prophesy, including women.
- b) **1 Co 14:1-5** 1 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may *prophesy*. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God. For no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. 3 On the other hand, the one who *prophesies* speaks to people for their upbuilding, encouragement, and consolation. 4 The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who *prophesies* builds up the church. 5 Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to *prophesy*. The one who *prophesies* is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.
- (1) The object of prophesy is to build up, encourage, and console the church as a whole.
- (2) παρακαλέω: “to ask to come and be present where the speaker is, *call to one’s side*...to urge strongly, appeal to, urge, exhort, encourage...to make a strong request for someth., *request, implore, entreat*...to instill someone with courage or cheer, *comfort, encourage, cheer up*.... In several places παρ. appears to mean simply treat someone in an inviting or congenial manner, someth. like our ‘be open to the other, have an open door’: *invite in, conciliate, be friendly to or speak to in a friendly manner*” (BDAG, 764-65).
- c) **1 Co 14:29-31** 29 Let two or three *prophets* speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. 31 For you can all *prophesy* one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged....
- (1) Again, the object of prophesy is for the church to learn and be encouraged.
- d) **1 Co 14:39** 39 So, my brothers and , earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.
- 3) The gift of prophesy is similar to the gifts of teaching and encouragement.
- a) **Ro 12:4-8** 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Messiah, and individually members one of another. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if *prophecy*, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who *teaches*, in his teaching; 8 the one who *exhorts* (παρακαλέω), in his exhortation....
- 4) To be on the safe side, let’s agree to call those who may have a gift of apostleship today “missionaries” or “church planters.” Equally, let’s call this who may have a gift of prophecy today “encouragers.” In other words,

we no longer have Apostles, but we do have pioneers, missionaries, and church planters. We no longer have Prophets, but we do have motivators, exhorters, and encouragers.

- (8) The ability to distinguish between spirits (διακρίσεις πνευμάτων) (v. 10c).
- (a) διακρίσεις: “the ability to distinguish and evaluate, *distinguishing, differentiation* of good and evil” (BDAG, 231).
  - (b) This is a God-given ability to differentiate whether a prophecy is genuinely from the Spirit or not.
    - 1) **1 Co 14:29** 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.
    - 2) **1 Th 5:20-21** 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything. Hold fast what is good.
  - (c) Distinguishing is to prophecy as speaking in foreign languages is to translating foreign languages.
- (9) Kinds of [foreign] languages (γέννη γλωσσῶν) (v. 10d).
- (a) This is a God-given ability to speak in a human languages not previously learned.
  - (b) In 1 Co, “tongues” always means actual human languages. 1 Co follows Acts 2. Nowhere in the Bible is glossolalia spoken of or encouraged. In the Bible, the word “tongue” is never used to describe glossolalia.
    - 1) **Ac 2:4-8** 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. ...6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because *each one was hearing them speak in his own language* (διάλεκτος). 7 And they were amazed and astonished saying, Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in *his own native language* (διάλεκτος)?
    - 2) **Re 5:9-10** 9 ... Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe, tongue (γλῶσσα), people, and nation....
  - (c) Ro 8 does not describe glossolalia. The groanings are the Holy Spirit’s, and they are soundless.
    - 1) **Ro 8:22-27** 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together (συστενάζω) in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan (στενάζω) inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ...26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unexpressed/wordless groanings (στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις). 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.
  - (d) Something isn’t biblical just because it feels good or seems spiritual, or because everyone around you is doing it.
  - (e) None of the spiritual gifts are intended for one’s personal private devotional or prayer life. They are all corporate and for the common good.



- (f) Glossolalia is easy. Anyone can do it. Speaking in previously unknown human languages is not easy at all.
- (g) The purpose of speaking in foreign languages in the 1st century ad was:
  - 1) To confirm the gospel message proclaimed by the first century apostles and prophets.
  - 2) To prove the Spirit had filled, in equal measure, Jewish believers (Ac 2:4), Samaritan believers (Ac 8:17), Gentile believers (Ac 10:44-47; 11:15-18) of the church age (Ac 19:6-7).
  - 3) To warn the Jews of the coming destruction of Jerusalem in ad 70.
    - a) *1 Corinthians* (c. ad 55), and *Acts* (c. ad 62) were both written before ad 70.
  - 4) To bypass the language barrier to communicate the gospel message to new people groups (in a reversal of the tower of Babel). Purpose is four is the only purpose that *may* be active today.
- (10) This is the real-time translation of [foreign] languages (v. 10e).
  - (a) ἑρμηνεία: “capacity of doing translation, *translation*...product of interpretive procedure, *interpretation, exposition* of words of Jesus” (BDAG, 393).
  - (b) The purpose was so that the church could understand and assent to what was being said.
- d. All these are empowered (ἐνεργέω) by one and the same Spirit (v. 11a).
  - (1) The Spirit apportions (διαιρέω) to each one as he wishes (βούλομαι) (v. 11b).
    - (a) διαιρέω: “distribute, divide” (BDAG, 229).
    - (b) **Ac 2:3** 3 And *divided* tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.
  - (2) Spiritual gift diversity is an awesome thing to witness in a local church!

### 3. One Body (1 Co 12:12-13).

- a. **1 Co 12:12-13** 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Messiah. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptised (βαπτίζω, aor.) into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were given to drink of one Spirit.
- b. As the body is one and has many members, so it is with Messiah (v. 12).
  - (1) Paul often compares the church to a human body.
    - (a) Ro 12:4-5; Eph 4:11-13; Col. 1:18; 2:19.
    - (2) Diversity among members is an essential characteristic of an unified organism.<sup>4</sup>
    - (3) Check out Ray C. Stedman, *Body Life: The Book That Inspired a Return to the Church's Real Meaning and Mission* (1995).
- c. We were all baptised (aor.) by one Spirit (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι) into one body (εἰς ἓν σῶμα) (v. 13a).
  - (a) At the moment of faith in Jesus, every believers is baptised/identified/immersed by the Spirit into Messiah. See *Spirit Baptism*.
  - (b) Every believer has been, by definition, Spirit baptised.
  - (c) Water baptism illustrates the Spirit baptism that has already occurred.
  - (2) This includes Jews and Greeks, slaves and free (v. 13b).

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 233.

- (a) This was an absolutely revolutionary concept in the ancient world.
- d. We all were given to drink of the one Spirit (ἐν πνεύμα) (v. 13c).
- (1) **Jn 7:37-39** 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.
- (2) “We have come into the body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit has come into us.”<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. Many Members (1 Co 12:14-20).

- a. **1 Co 12:14-20** 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged (τίθημι, aor.) the members in the body, each one of them, as he desired (θέλω, aor.). 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.
- b. The body has many members (v. 14).
- (1) The foot and the hand are both part of the body (v. 15).
- (2) The ear and the eye both belong to the body (v. 16).
- (a) No church member should tell himself he is worthless.
- c. If all were a single member, there would be no body (v. 19).
- (1) If the whole body was an eye, the body could not hear (v. 17a).
- (2) If the whole body was an ear, the body could not smell (v. 17b).
- (a) If an automobile were made up only of hundreds of horns, it could not function.<sup>6</sup>
- d. God has arranged each member in the body just as he desired (v. 18).
- (1) We are to discover how God has gifted us and become as effective as possible where he has placed us. We are to concentrate on using the abilities we have received rather than longing to be different or insisting on doing things that God has not gifted us to do.
- e. There are many parts, but one body (v. 20).

#### 5. No Division in the Body (1 Co 12:21-26).

- a. **1 Co 12:21-26** 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed (συγκεράννυμι, aor.) the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division (σχίσμα) in the body, but that the members

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Constable, *Notes on 1 Corinthians*, 234.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Constable, “Notes on 1 Corinthians,” 234.

may have the same care (μεριμνάω, pres.) for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all the members co-suffer. If one member is honored, all the members co-rejoice.

- b. The eye needs the hand (v. 21a).
- c. The head needs the feet (v. 21b).
- d. The less impressive body parts are indispensable (v. 22).
  - (1) **2 Co 12:9** 9 But [Jesus] said to me [Paul], My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Messiah may rest upon me.
- e. We bestow greater honour on our “less honourable” body parts (v. 23a).
- f. We treat our “unpresentable” body parts with greater modesty (v. 23b-24a).
  - (1) We are to honour our “less honourable” members instead of despising or neglecting them (i.e., David Nichol).
- g. God has so blended/composed/mixed the body (v. 24b):
  - (a) συγκεράννυμι: “to bring about a blend by mixing various items, *blend, unite*, lit., pass., of colors...to effect a harmonious unit, *compose*, fig. ext. of 1” (*BDAG*, 952).
  - (2) As to give greater honour to the parts that lacked it (v. 24c).
  - (3) That there will be no crack/division/split/tear in the body (v. 25a).
    - (a) σχίσμα: “the condition resulting from splitting or tearing, *tear, crack*...the condition of being divided because of conflicting aims or objectives, *division, dissension, schism*” (*BDAG*, 981).
  - (4) That the members may have the same care for one another (v. 25b).
    - 1) μεριμνάω: “to attend to, care for, be concerned about” (*BDAG*, 632).
    - (b) If one member suffers, everyone suffers (v. 26a).
      - 1) “When a thorn enters the heel, the whole body feels it, and is concerned: the back bends, the belly and thighs contract themselves, the hands come forward and draw out the thorn, the head stoops, and the eyes regard the affected member with intense gaze.”<sup>7</sup>
    - (c) If one member is honoured, everyone rejoices (v. 26b).
      - 1) **Ro 12:15** 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

## 6. The Greater Gifts (1 Co 12:27-31).

- a. **1 Co 12:27-31** 27 Now you are the body of Messiah and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed (τίθημι, aor.) in the church first apostles (ἀποστόλους), second prophets (προφήτας), third teachers (διδασκάλους), then miracles (δυνάμεις), then gifts of healing (χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων), helpings (ἀντιλήμψεις), administrations (κυβερνήσεις), and kinds of [foreign] languages (γένη γλωσσῶν). 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in [foreign] languages? Do all translate? 31 But strive for (ζηλώω, pres.) the greater/more valuable gifts (τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα).
- b. The Corinthians are the body of Messiah and individually members of it (v. 27).
- c. God has appointed in the church (v. 28a):
  - (a) The activity of God in composing the body is very prominent in this chapter!

<sup>7</sup> St. John Chrysostom.

- (b) There is an hierarchy/order of precedence/ranking of gifts and ministries. Some gifts and ministries are more central than others to the mission of the church.
- (2) First apostles (v. 28b).
  - (a) Apostles: select group of men who founded the church.
  - (b) apostles: missionaries and church planters sent out to new areas.
- (3) Second prophets (v. 28c).
  - (a) Prophets: select group of men and women who communicated new special revelation in the 1st century ad.
  - (b) prophets: speakers who warn, encourage, and comfort from the already-delivered Scriptures (1 Co 14:3)(e.g., Ed, Annalise, Michael, Ian).
- (4) Third teachers (v. 28d).
  - (a) διδάσκω: “to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting, *teach*” (BDAG, 241).
  - (b) Teachers instruct and preserve sound doctrine from the Scriptures (e.g., Steve, Jeff).
  - (c) Teachers are less important than Prophets but more important than prophets.
  - (d) **Heb 5:12** 12 For though by this time you ought to be *teachers*, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food....
  - (e) Remember Paul only lists speaking gifts in Ephesians 4.
    - 1) **Eph 4:11** 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherd-teachers 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Messiah....
- (5) Then miracles (v. 28e).
- (6) Then gifts of healing (v. 28f).
- (7) Helpings (v. 28g).
- (8) Administrations (v. 28h).
- (9) Kinds of foreign languages (v. 28i).
  - (a) Paul lists foreign languages last because it is the least important of the gifts listed.
- d. Not all have these gifts (v. 30).
  - (1) It is wrong to equate one gift, especially the least of them, speaking in foreign languages, with spirituality.
  - (2) All the Corinthians have been baptised by the Spirit, but only some of them spoke in foreign languages.
- e. The Corinthians are to strive for the greater/more important gifts (v. 31), particularly the speaking gifts (apostleship, prophecy, teaching).
  - (1) ζηλόω: “be positively and intensely interested in someth., strive, desire, exert oneself earnestly, be dedicated” (BDAG, 427).
    - (a) “To strive zealously means more than to pray; it includes effort toward cultivating and toward producing a receptivity and a fitness on our part.”<sup>8</sup>
  - (2) μείζονα: “pert. to being relatively superior in importance, *great*” (BDAG, 624).

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<sup>8</sup> Lenski, 542.

- (3) “While the bestowal of gifts is the sovereign prerogative of the Spirit (vv. 8-11, 18), human desire plays a part in His bestowal (cf. James 4:2).”<sup>9</sup>
- (4) While there are no Apostles or Prophets today, we should strive to be missionaries, church planters, preachers, and teachers.
- (5) We are to pray, cultivate, and move toward the speaking gifts. Practically, we may do this by auditing a Bible college or seminary class, teaching at ABC, Rally, or Tu Kaha.

**Unity + Diversity = Maturity**

	Unity	Diversity	Maturity
1 Corinthians	12:1-13	12:14-31	13:1-13
Romans	12:1-5	12:6-8	12:9-21
Ephesians	4:1-6	4:7-12	4:13-16

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Constable, “Notes on 1 Corinthians,” 241.