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1 Corinthians 12:10 - 31



1 Corinthians - Steve Gregg

The book of 1 Corinthians, specifically chapters 12-14, puts spiritual gifts in proper perspective by emphasizing the importance of love and concern for others. The gift of tongues should be coupled with interpretation to edify the church, while prophecy requires a corresponding gift of discernment. The body of Christ is composed of diverse members fulfilling different functions united under the headship of Christ, and while every part deserves care, unity and love should prevail in the Christian community.

Transcript

In our previous session we were talking about 1 Corinthians 12, and to a certain extent we talked up through verse 10. The reason we didn't get any further than that, partially, is because I spent the first half hour of our 90-minute session giving sort of an introductory overview to the whole subject matter of chapters 12, 13, and 14. You may have noticed that I've been doing a lot of reading of chapters 12, 13, and 14.

I looked at the clock after I was finished sort of making some introductory comments, and a half hour had passed, which left only an hour, and you can't expect to cover more than 10 verses in an hour. When we got through, almost through, the 10th verse, we are talking at this point about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, although the discussion in general is more about spirituality as a larger subject, I think. I point out that in verse 1, when Paul says, it does not have a noun there.

It does not tell us spiritual what. Although the word gifts is supplied by the translators, and it's there in italics, in the Greek it's simply the adjective. Now concerning spiritual, and a spiritual is plural, and it's used substantively as a noun, but it's not clear from the form whether it's intended as a neuter or a masculine noun.

If neuter, spiritual things or gifts could be a good suggestion. Although if it's masculine, it would be spiritual men or spiritual people. And there is good reason to believe that what Paul is talking about here is not just spiritual gifts, but what constitutes a spiritual person.

And basically, seeking in this entire discussion of chapters 12 through 14 to correct a

wrong perception on that very point, that spirituality is not measured in terms of a person's charismatic gifts. Spirituality is measured in terms of love, which, by the way, Paul has made that point previously, back in chapter 8, when he was talking in another lengthy discussion, which was also three chapters long, about Christian liberty, and that the more you know about grace, and the more you know about liberty, the more likely you are to feel at liberty to do many things, but this knowledge may incline you to be puffed up, whereas love would incline you to build up other people. Love has, as its concern, not personal self-aggrandizement or self-indulgence, but love has as its object the building up of the other person.

Now he made that point in chapter 8 where he said love builds up, or love edifies, the word is, and he'll also be making that point when we get to 1 Corinthians 4. A person who speaks in tongues, he builds up himself, nothing really wrong with that, but it's more important when the church comes together to build up each other, because that's what we're there for, that's what love is concerned about, it's the other person's well-being, the other person's spiritual development, and so forth. By the way, that doesn't mean you shouldn't be interested in your own spiritual development, but I think you'll find that when you focus on using all the resources available to you to build up the other people, that you are built up. In fact, that's the mark that you have been, because that's a mark of maturity, that's the mark of true spirituality.

Now I think it is because the Corinthians had placed a very high regard on the charismatic gifts of the Spirit as indicators of spirituality that Paul spent as much time as he did talking on that subject. And as I tried to point out yesterday, while charismatics like myself have often used these chapters as an affirmation of our need for gifts in this present day, and of the value of the gifts for the work of God, and so forth, to tell you the truth, I personally think Paul wrote the chapter to make the opposite point. Not to say we don't need the gifts, but not to affirm or encourage them either, since the Corinthians already were encouraged in that area, without any help from him.

They were already zealous for spiritual gifts. And Paul makes that point a little later on, that you are zealous for spiritual gifts. He says, therefore, you should seek the ones that are going to edify the church.

So, Paul didn't write these chapters to make us zealous for spiritual gifts. He wrote these chapters to put spiritual gifts in a proper perspective. I suspect that most Christians, if they have gifts, or if they are in churches where gifts are manifested, it's easy to get zealous for them.

You don't need someone encouraging you to. Supernatural things are, in their very nature, sensational. And sensational things tend to get our attention and often get us excited.

What is needed is for us to be more level-headed. There's nothing wrong to have gifts.

There's nothing wrong with supernatural things.

Those are excellent things, but church work cannot really succeed without them. The work of the church is really the work of God, working through gifted members of the church in supernatural ways, even as he did through Jesus when he was on earth. We affirm all these things.

However, the principal work of God is to make us like Jesus, not in the power that we manifest, but in the love that we manifest. That's the purpose of these chapters. It is not to condemn the gifts, nor to encourage them, but simply to put them in their proper perspective with reference to what they have to say about a person's spirituality and what they do not have to say about a person's spirituality.

In verses 8-10, there was a listing of gifts, probably the best-known list of gifts among Charismatics. There are other lists of gifts. There's one in Romans 12.

There's one in Ephesians 4, gifts of a different sort. In Ephesians 4, verse 11, it says, And he gave some apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers. That's another list of a different sort of gifts, but there are many kinds of gifts.

As I mentioned yesterday, even in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul refers to marriage as a charisma, and singleness or celibacy is a charisma, a gift of the Spirit as well, a gift of grace. So there's a lot of things that aren't in this list that Paul, in his other writings, referred to as charismata, as gifts of the Spirit. Gifts of grace, more properly, is how the word should be translated.

Now, this list, I went through. Word of wisdom, word of knowledge, gifts of healings, the same spirit. Oh, faith is there too.

And then we've got the working of miracles and prophecy and discerning of spirits and different kinds of tongues and the interpretation of tongues. As I went through the list, I pointed out to you that in the early days of my charismatic experience, I just bought into whatever I was told by charismatic teachers as to what the meaning of these expressions was, what the meaning of word of wisdom or word of knowledge or discerning of spirits was. And I shared with you, I have some different opinions now about some of them, as far as what Paul probably meant by those words.

I believe in every supernatural gift that I ever did believe in, but I sometimes have changed my opinion about what some of these names refer to. I will not get into detail on that, as I did yesterday, because that's why we didn't finish, because I did then. But near the end of the list, we had reference in verse 10 to prophecy and discerning of spirits and then tongues and interpretation of tongues.

I suggested as we were closing yesterday, and I didn't quite finish what I wanted to say because we ran out of time, that this represents two logical couplings. Prophecy with

discerning of spirits and tongues with interpretation of tongues. An utterance in tongues, as we shall see later on in chapter 14, is not really complete unless there's an interpretation.

And when I speak of an utterance in tongues, I'm not necessarily speaking about praying in tongues. And we'll talk about that difference between those things in chapter 14. I do believe there is a place for prayer in using the gift of tongues where no interpretation is required.

Because as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2, the person who does that is speaking to God, not to man. God requires no interpretation in order for him to understand it. If God needed to have it interpreted to him, we wonder who would give us the interpretation.

It couldn't be him, since he would already understand it. I think there is a use of tongues that requires no interpretation because it is devotional in prayer toward God. But in the church, and that is what Paul is mainly focusing on throughout these chapters, is the use of the gifts in the church.

An utterance in tongues is not complete in itself. It requires an interpretation. And the reason for that is that no one understands it.

Now, sometimes when people spoke in tongues, one case in particular on the day of Pentecost, there were people who understood it. But that was not your typical function of the gift of tongues in the congregation. Actually, that was an evangelistic meeting, in a sense.

I mean, sure, it was a gathering of believers. But when they began to speak in tongues on the day of Pentecost, it became a public phenomenon, and the unbelievers came rushing in to see what was going on. And it was the phenomenon of tongues that got their attention, and then the gospel was preached to them.

And they understood what was being said in tongues. It was assigned to them. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14, tongues can be assigned to the unbelievers.

It certainly was on the day of Pentecost. But the more common use of tongues in the congregation, in the believers' meeting, is where somebody speaks, apparently, a word that no one understands, and it requires an equally supernatural gift of interpretation in order to get the word translated into accessible thought. And so Paul even says in 1 Corinthians 14, 13, he says, therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret, too.

Now, there are separate gifts. One speaks in a tongue, another interprets, but it's also possible to pray, if you're going to speak in tongues, to pray that you'll be the one who interprets, because an utterance in tongues in the congregation is not functional for the edification of the church unless there's an interpretation. Now, over in chapter 14, verse

5, Paul says, I wish that you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied, for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless, indeed, he interprets.

That the church may receive edification. Now, notice, prophecy is better than tongues, unless there's also interpretation. And that unless suggests that tongues coupled with interpretation is as good as prophecy.

Prophecy is no better than an utterance in tongues that is interpreted, because both of them are intelligible to the listeners and can edify the church. The reason that prophecy is better than tongues without an interpretation of the tongue is simply because prophecy can be understood, and the tongue cannot without an interpretation. So, I mean, sometimes people say, well, tongues is the least of the gifts.

Let me just say this. The Bible nowhere says anything like that. There's not a clue anywhere that Paul regarded tongues to be the least of the gifts.

He did indicate that he'd rather speak five words in an intelligible language in the church than 10,000 words in an unknown tongue. Now, that might be seemingly belittling the value of tongues, because to have 10,000 words in an unknown tongue is outweighed in value by five words that are understandable. But, of course, that's assuming that the tongue is not interpreted, because if you have an interpretation of the 10,000 words, then you've got 10,000 intelligible words as opposed to five.

I mean, you'd rather have the 10,000 words in the tongue, assuming you have the time and the meaning for it, if there is an interpretation of it that edifies the church. And in the immediate context where Paul makes the comment I just mentioned, that he'd rather speak five words, that's verse 19 of chapter 14, he says, yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding that I might teach others also than 10,000 words in the tongue. That sentence begins with the word yet.

It's contrasting it with something he said in verse 18, which is, I thank God I speak with tongues more than you all. Now, he said, I speak with tongues a whole lot myself, but in the church I'd rather speak in language you can understand. There is tongues used in the church, there is tongues used outside the church.

Paul would speak his 10,000 words in an unknown tongue when he was alone, in his prayer closet, and he'd save it for there. And then he'd come to church and he'd have five anointed words to give, which were better than the same 10,000 words if they'd uttered without an interpretation there. But Paul's whole thought is, the value of tongues is for it to be interpreted so that the church can receive edification.

Without an interpretation, it has no value to the church. It may have value to you individually, but the church is not the place for you to come and just bless yourself. You

can do that at home.

You can do that anywhere. But when you gather with the saints, you're there to bless others, to edify others, to seek to encourage and strengthen others, not to just have your own little happy experience. Which is, as I mentioned when a caller asked me about this on the radio last night, one thing that makes me a little uneasy about the movement where people are explaining as the definitive mark of revival in some churches today, the experience of laughter and some of these other things that we hear about these days.

I have no objection to laughing, and I do believe that the Holy Spirit moves us to joyful laughter on occasion. I have known the phenomenon. I mean, years ago, it's not that uncommon.

But to begin to say, well, now we're going to go to church, and what we're going to have here is an experience where everyone's going to get happy in the Spirit. We're going to get to laugh, and we're all going to laugh. When I've been to a meeting like that, and in the meeting, I didn't particularly get any blessing from them laughing, I guess.

I was glad they were happy, but it seemed to me like nobody but the person laughing was enjoying themselves, except for those who take delight in such things, which are kind of strange things to take delight in. It means someone can shake and fall and laugh. Frankly, I don't doubt that the Holy Spirit might make people happy enough to laugh on many occasions, but that's not what the gathering of the saints is for.

The gathering of the saints is not for me to get happy and fall down and laugh at myself silly, but it's for me to contribute something of value to the people I'm gathered with. I can laugh at home. I can laugh in the presence of God anywhere, but when I'm in the presence of the saints, time is of the essence.

Every moment should be used for edifying one another. And that's what Paul's concept, I think, of the gifts is about, too, and why he, in some cases, seems to speak disparagingly about tongues. This has given people the impression that Paul didn't really respect the gift of tongues much.

Not so. I don't think Paul considered the gift of tongues any less than any other gift, so long as it was interpreted. If it was not interpreted, it was not a good thing to do in the church, but it had value outside the church in your devotional life, as Paul makes clear himself about his own practice.

Now, I mentioned that tongues is not anywhere said to be the least of the gifts. The reason some people think it is is because there are a number of lists of gifts, and virtually every time that tongues is included on the list, it's last, along with interpretation of tongues. But that hardly is the same thing as saying it's the least of the gifts.

Nothing like that is really said. Tongues has a value. As Paul said, he that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself.

That's not bad. It's good to be edified. Everyone needs that.

But, in fact, when you read your Bible, you edify yourself. When you pray, when you fellowship with others, when you listen to edifying Christian music, I mean, there's all kinds of things that edify you, and there's nothing wrong with doing them. In fact, it's a good way to spend your time.

But when you come to the meeting, you're not there to edify yourself. You're there for mutual edification, to minister something that will strengthen the body corporately, and in particular, the individuals that you have contact with there. Now, it's obvious that tongues and interpretation of tongues are necessarily coupled.

They are two gifts, though one person might well have them both. As Paul says, if you speak in tongues, pray that you can interpret two. And I mentioned yesterday, as we're closing, that prophecy and discerning of spirits, as I understand it, is also a similar coupling.

That the prophetic utterance in the church is not complete until there's been a discerning or a judging of the utterance. And I told you at that time that I believe discerning of spirits, in this particular connection, the word spirits doesn't mean demonic spirits, and doesn't mean angel spirits, and doesn't mean a Jezebel spirit, but what it refers to is prophetic utterances. I showed you yesterday that in 1 John 4, John said, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out in the world.

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God, and so forth. These spirits that he's talking about, I mean, we could understand them in terms of demonic spirits versus the Holy Spirit, and no doubt that is what lies behind these spirits, but I think the word spirit is a spiritual utterance.

Or at least the spirit behind an utterance, at the very least. And there's another reason I don't think I gave you yesterday for my thinking that that's what he means. Because there in 1 Corinthians 12, 10, the word discerning of spirits, the word discerning is diakrisis in the Greek, or diakrisis, and the same word, essentially, is used one other place, and that is in 1 Corinthians 14, which is obviously a part of this same discussion, and verse 29, where he says, Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others discern.

It's the same essential word that he used when he spoke of discerning of spirits. Now, notice the passage in 1 Corinthians 14 that we're reading there. It starts in verse 27.

If anyone speaks in a tongue, let it be two or at the most three, each in his turn, and let one interpret. But if there's no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let others judge.

Notice the connection between tongues interpretation and prophecy and judging, or discerning. Two or three people speak in tongues, and others interpret. Two or three people prophesy, and others discern.

You see, just as interpretation of tongues is the complementary part of tongues, and without both, the church cannot safely, or in any sense, receive edification, so also, once a prophecy is given, there must also be the other gift, functioning, that discerns whether that is a prophecy from God or not. Which is, of course, what John said when he said, Don't believe every spirit, but test the spirit. Judge prophecy.

There's another place where this is advocated in Paul, 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 20 and 21. 1 Corinthians, excuse me, 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 20 and 21, Paul says, Do not despise prophecies. Test all things, and hold fast what is good.

You don't despise prophecies. Now, why would anyone despise prophecies? Well, if you've been in the charismatic movement long enough, and heard some of the hokey stuff that passes as prophecy in some cases, you might know why people in charismatic churches, especially sensible people, might begin to get a little cynical. Because some real goofy stuff is sometimes passed off as if it were prophecy, stuff that's unscriptural, stuff that's heretical, stuff that's just plain goofy.

But there's true prophecy as well. The problem is, if you hear enough goofy prophecies, you might be inclined to be cynical about all prophecies, and begin to despise prophecies, and Paul says, Don't do that. Don't despise prophecies, just test them.

Test everything, and hold to what is good. It's quite clear that prophecy in the church doesn't function in an edifying and trustworthy manner without the corresponding gift of discerning, or judging. And the word discerning of spirits, as I said, is the very same word, discerning, is the same word that's used in 1 Corinthians 14, where it says, Let the others discern, or judge what the prophets say.

So, I'm of the impression that in verse 10, when he mentions prophecy and discerning of spirits, those are corresponding gifts that work together. And tongues and interpretation, again, another coupling, these have to be coupled in order for the church to really be edified, and kept safe from false prophecies, and so forth. Okay, going on, verse 11.

It's already used a half hour. Okay, verse 11, But one in the same spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as he wills. Now, this sovereign spirit of God is the one who determines how the gifts are distributed.

You don't decide, although there's really nothing wrong with asking God to give you a

gift that you don't already possess, because, for one thing, the Holy Spirit might be inclining you to ask, and the Holy Spirit might just desire to answer such a petition. After all, Paul does say, at the end of chapter 31, Desire earnestly the best gifts, and in chapter 14, verse 1, he says, Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. Now, he tells us to earnestly desire good gifts, and particularly prophecy.

Now, not everyone is a prophet, and Paul makes that clear by asking the rhetorical question, in verse 29 of chapter 12, 1 Corinthians 12, 29, Are all apostles, are all prophets? The answer being, no, not all are prophets, but everyone should desire to have gifts that are by the church, like a gift of prophecy, and there's certainly nothing wrong with asking God and desiring it and so forth, if it pleases Him, He'll give it to you. I've heard people say, well, the gifts of the Spirit, you shouldn't seek those. God just gives them out as He wills, after all, that's what it says in verse 11 of chapter 12, He distributes each one individually as He wills.

True enough, He does. He also feeds us as He wills, and saves us as He wills, and does many other good things for us as He wills, but that doesn't mean it comes without us wanting it, it doesn't mean that it comes without us asking for it. There's many things He wills that we must pray for, we're supposed to pray according to His will.

And therefore, I would not understand verse 11 to be saying, since the Holy Spirit distributes these individually as He wills, we therefore shouldn't have any interest in changing the status of our own gift in this, in other words, we shouldn't desire gifts we don't have or whatever, to me, that does not follow, and it doesn't agree with Paul's own teaching when he says we should desire the best gift. It is also the case that a person may move into additional gifts if they're faithful in that which is less, they may be given more. The Apostle Paul, upon his conversion, was not an apostle.

I guess he was in a sense, but he wasn't functioning as an apostle, he wasn't gifted as much, he was sent, but the first thing we see Paul doing is not planting churches, but evangelizing in a town that already had a church, Damascus. Got run out of that town, eventually he was stationed in Antioch, and in addition to being an evangelist, he was now a teacher and prophet. According to Acts 13.1, there were certain teachers and prophets in the church of Antioch, and Paul's name is on the list.

And then, later on, he and Barnabas are sent out, which is what apostle means, sent out, they're sent out when the Holy Spirit is separate from Barnabas himself or the minister has called them to, then they're sent out by the Holy Spirit, and from then on they're called apostles. So you've got a guy who, at his conversion, is first an evangelist, later we see him functioning as a teacher and prophet in the church, then, later still, he's sent out and he's called an apostle. So it is possible that one gift, the gift you have at the time you're saved, may not be the only gift you'll ever possess.

There is such a thing as promotion. And I don't even know if promotion is the right word, because God might want to use you in one thing at one point in your life and want to use you more in another thing later. When I was first baptized in the Spirit, I was doing some teaching, but I was much more used in evangelism.

I was in an evangelistic band where, in those days, when a Christian band played somewhere, the purpose was getting people saved. So we sang songs that were about getting people saved, and then someone would preach. In our band it was me, I preached.

And we had a lot of people, we saw a lot of people saved. No special credit to me, people were getting saved at the drop of a hat all over the place in those days, because there was a revival happening, and I was fortunate enough to be able to preach in some of the places before they got saved. They would have gotten saved maybe some other way, but God was going to save them, and He let me be there to preach.

But I was very encouraged with the results of my evangelistic effort when I was first in ministry. As time went on, I got more and more involved in teaching, and it seems to me now that teaching is far more descriptive of what my ministry and gift is. I'm not even sure that I'd still be as effective in evangelism as I was then.

I still enjoy it, but I find myself in a different role than I was then. I suppose it's not too uncommon for people to have one gift at one point, and either have another gift added, even eclipse the previous gift, maybe even replace it. But it's all as God wills, but that doesn't mean that our will is never to enter into the question.

You can't ask God to give you another gift. Jesus said if earthly fathers were able to do good things to their children, how much more will your heavenly father give good gifts to those who ask him? So the word gift in that passage in Matthew 7 is not charisma. It's a different Greek word there, but nonetheless it's true.

God gives good gifts to those who ask Him. There's no reason you shouldn't ask Him that you can prophesy or that you can have some other good gift. Going on now, verse 12.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. Now you and I, of course, have read the New Testament before, and we know that Paul uses the metaphor for the church of the body of Christ. And for that reason, when we find the word body in verse 12, it's probable that our first impression is he's talking about the church, the body of Christ.

So he'd be saying, for as the church is one and has many members, but all the members of the church, and so forth. That is not what he means here, however. He's introducing the concept of the body of Christ here.

He has actually made allusions to it previously in 1 Corinthians, although what he begins

to do in 1 Corinthians 12, 12, is the earliest in all the extent of correspondence that has survived in Paul's writings. It is the earliest discussion of Paul's understanding of the body of Christ we have. But he has made a reference to it in the past.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 15. 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 15 says, Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Notice he doesn't say members of the body of Christ, but members of Christ. We need to understand that when Paul says we're the body of Christ, that's not different than saying that we're part of Christ himself.

After all, every part of my body is part of me. Another place previously in 1 Corinthians he's brought up the subject, is in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 17, where he's talking about taking communion together. He said, for we being many are one bread and one body.

For we all partake of that one bread. Now, these two references, in chapter 6 where he says we're members of Christ, and here where he says we're all one body, of course this presupposes that he had already talked to the Corinthians sometime previous about his idea, his understanding of the church as the body of Christ. But he has never discussed it at length in writing for us until 1 Corinthians.

Chronologically, 1 Corinthians is the earliest epistle that has a lengthy discussion on the subject and we're coming to it now. What we need to understand about Paul's understanding on this, which I take to be the correct one of course, the inspired one, is that to be part of the body of Christ means that you are organically part of Christ himself. It is no doubt an essential aspect of what he means when he says we are in Christ, which is one of Paul's favorite expressions.

We are in Christ, we're accepted in the beloved, that means in Christ. We are elect in Christ. We died and rose again, we're in Christ, seated in heavenly places at the right hand of God.

In Christ all this is true of us. And being in Christ in one sense is a sort of a legal reality that God acknowledges. That is, he kind of attributes to us or imputes to us things that are true of Christ because we are included in him, in God's acceptance of Christ.

He accepts us as part of that. But functionally, it's true also that we are in Christ like organs in a body. That we are part of him.

He is the head. We are the flesh and the bones, as Paul put it in another epistle later on in Ephesians chapter 5. He said we are of his flesh and of his bones. So it is all the same for Paul to say the church is the body of Christ, on the one hand, and on the other hand to say the church is Christ.

But if we say the church is Christ, we mean by that the church including the head. Christ himself, the head, and those of us who are the members of his body combined form the corporate man, the new man, Christ. In order to get some of this context, look at

Ephesians, which was written a lot later than 1 Corinthians.

But there is a possibility that Paul had taught some of these things personally to the Corinthians when he had been with them. By comparing Paul's other letters, we get a bigger picture of what he taught generally. And since we know he taught many things to the Corinthians that we don't have record of, we can maybe deduce that he conceivably could have made some of these points to them in their presence.

But in Ephesians 2, he is talking about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. And how that, in verse 11, he says we were once alienated, or verse 12 of chapter 2 of Ephesians, once alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. However, Christ has become our peace and he has brought us near, verses 13 and 14 say.

And it says in verse 14, he broke down the middle wall of division between us, that is between the Jew and the Gentile. And verse 15, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself, that's in Christ, one new man, one new person, which is, of course, the church. From the two, thus making peace.

From the believing body of Gentiles and the believing body of Jews, Christ has removed the racial distinction and combined them to make one new body, one new man. And the new man, the body of Christ, is one of Paul's favorite understandings and concepts of the church. I mentioned earlier in Ephesians 5, I gave you the verse that I mentioned, it says in verse 30, for we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bone.

Earlier in Ephesians, and this is an interesting statement if you think it through, in Ephesians 1, verses 22 and 23, Ephesians 1, 22 and 23, it says, He has put all things under his feet, that is, the Father has put all things under Christ's feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is, that is, the church is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Now that's an intriguing statement. The church is Christ's body, that's not new to us, we see that all over the New Testament, but the church, which is Christ's body, is the fullness of him.

He is not full or complete without a body. Just as my head would not be complete without a body, Christ is, in a sense, not complete without the members of his body. Now there's another sense, of course, in which Christ is a complete individual or a complete person, but not complete in the sense that God has ordained for Christ to be, ultimately, a multi-membered body of which we are members, and he is the head.

We get back to 1 Corinthians 12, and Paul, every time he uses the word body, in 1 Corinthians 12, he is talking about the human body, not the church. He is making an analogy from the human body, and at the very end of the sentence, he implies it, too, and says, so also is Christ. That is, what is true of a human body is also true of Christ.

So he says, for as the body, meaning your body, my body, any body, is one. None of us has more than one body. But each body is made up of many members of a great variety of sorts and functions.

But all the members of that one body, being many and diverse, are nonetheless part of one body, one organism. The hand and the foot and the eye and the ear and the mouth are all very, very different things. I mean, they don't look like they have anything in common.

But they do have something in common if they're all part of the same body. They're all the same person. And he says, so as a body is that way, we take that for granted, but that's what Christ is like.

So also is Christ. And we might feel more comfortable if he said, so also is the body of Christ, or the church, or something like that. As the physical body has many members, but they're all one body, that's what the church is like.

A body with many members. But he says, no, that's what Christ is like. Christ is a body with many members.

Because the body of Christ is nothing other than the extension, the fullness of him in the earth. We are the part of him that is on the earth right now. We have an exalted head in heaven giving orders to the members of the body, but we are him on earth.

Now that's not anything like what the New Age teaches about every man is Christ. I mean, they're talking about every individual is individually Christ. We just need to get used to the idea.

And they would say every human is Christ whether they know it or not. Of course, that's an entirely different concept. First of all, we're not talking about individually anyone being Christ.

We're talking about corporately all who are redeemed, all who have been joined to the body by the spirit of God, are an organic whole and taken together with the head and all the rest of the body. This is how God views Christ. And that's why he talks about us as being in him.

Very different than this idea that I am Christ, you are Christ, everyone's Christ. And of course, Paul also is not speaking universally of all humanity. He's talking about saved people, born-again people, people who have the spirit of Christ, have corporately joined together by the spirit and are corporately Christ, along with the head.

Without him, we wouldn't be anything. We'd just be a decapitated corpse. Okay, verse 13.

Now this verse, unfortunately, is very controversial. And the reason it's controversial is it's one of the few verses in the Bible, the only one in Paul's writings, that refers to baptism in the Holy Spirit. Now, the expression baptism in the Holy Spirit obviously is a word that's in common currency in the body of Christ now, especially among Pentecostal Charismatics.

I use it frequently, and I use it in the same sense as Pentecostal Charismatics do, because I hold to the Pentecostal view of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The problem with it is it's not found very often in Scripture. It's found originally in the teaching of John the Baptist.

When they asked him, you know, why do you baptize if you're no one so all-fired special? I mean, you're not Elijah, you're not the Messiah, why do you baptize? He said, well, I baptize only in water, but he that comes after me is greater than I, and I'm not worthy to untie his sandal shoestring, but he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. And we never hear the expression, baptize with the Holy Spirit again, until after John is dead, even after Jesus has died and resurrected, and he's about ready to ascend, in fact, it's just a few moments before he ascends into heaven, he says in Acts 1.5, John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. And apart from those statements in John the Baptist and that one statement by Jesus, you never find the expression, baptize in the Holy Spirit, except those two places and here.

So it's a very infrequent expression. That doesn't make it meaningless, in fact, it makes it intriguing, because it's mentioned by John, it's mentioned by Jesus, it's mentioned by Paul, yet infrequently enough to make it challenging to figure out exactly what it's referred to. Now, some have pointed out, here in verse 13 of 1 Corinthians 12, we don't quite have that expression, baptize with the Holy Spirit.

We have here, baptized by the Holy Spirit, for by one spirit we were all baptized into one body. Well, technically, this difference cannot be pressed, because the word by, here, by one spirit, the word by in the Greek is en, e-n, which is the normal Greek word for in. So I'm not sure why it's translated by in this case, but it'd be properly translated for in one spirit, we were all baptized.

So he's obviously talking about being baptized in the spirit. Now, the reason this becomes controversial, especially between the Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal branches of the Church, is because the Pentecostal and Charismatic side believes, generally, that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is subsequent, or at least something else other than just regeneration. Regeneration is what happens when you're born again, you're spiritually regenerated, the Spirit comes to be within you, but being filled with the Spirit, being baptized in the Spirit, having the Spirit come upon you, is treated as a separate phenomenon.

Now, as a Charismatic myself, I personally believe that the baptism of the Spirit is a

separate phenomenon from regeneration. I also believe that we have evidence in the Scripture that that separate phenomenon sometimes accompanies salvation. There are some who are baptized in the Spirit seemingly at the same time that they're saved, or a few moments afterwards.

Others, however, seem to be baptized in the Spirit a few days, or weeks, or, in my experience, a few years after their conversion. The point is that whether it occurs at the same time or at a different time, it's always something else besides regeneration. Regeneration of the baptism of the Spirit can happen both the same day, the same moment, even, but that doesn't make them the same thing.

That is the Charismatic Pentecostal view, which I personally hold. Now, the non-Charismatic view is, no, the baptism of the Spirit is what every Christian has. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit from the moment of conversion, and Paul simply refers to this universal phenomenon that all Christians have that happens at the time of regeneration, this is what he calls the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

And this verse seems to give support to that notion, because it says, for by one Spirit, or we could read, in one Spirit, were we all baptized into one body. Which suggests that it is this phenomenon, being baptized in the Holy Spirit, that has brought us into the body of Christ. Now, if we understand being in the body of Christ as the same thing as saved, it suggests that everyone that is saved is baptized in the Holy Spirit.

In fact, they got saved and came into the body of Christ as a result of being baptized in the Spirit. Now, of course, the Pentecostals of the extreme variety could prove something else with this. They could say, no, not all Christians are baptized in the Spirit, but not all are in the body of Christ either.

Only those that are baptized in the Spirit are in the body of Christ, because Paul said so. I mean, in a sense, the thing could be taken to prove both things, although I wouldn't feel comfortable with either suggestion. I would like to say that Paul is talking to a specific group of Christians, for one thing.

He had converted them himself, that is, he had led them to the Lord. We have evidence from other parts of Scripture that Paul's custom was, as soon as he led them to the Lord and baptized them in water, he laid hands on them and saw to it that they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. We have, for example, an example in Acts 19, where Paul met these twelve men in Ephesus who were disciples of some sort, but he could tell they weren't ordinary Christians.

He asked them if they had been filled with the Holy Spirit, if they had received the Holy Spirit, since they were believing. They said, we haven't even heard there was such a thing as the Holy Spirit. He said, well, he told them about Jesus, really, and they apparently hadn't heard about Jesus either, which makes you wonder what kind of

disciples they were, but they apparently had only known John's baptism and were disciples of John.

In any case, Paul told them about the Lord, they decided they'd better get baptized again, so he baptized them in water, and then, as soon as they came out of the water, he put his hands on them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Certainly, that story gives the impression that we are viewing Paul's normal modus operandi, that when he led people to the Lord, he baptized them in water, and then he'd lay hands on them for them to be filled with the Spirit. There's no reason why he should follow that process there in Ephesus and not elsewhere.

Therefore, although we're not told specifically, I think, and simply the record is too incomplete for us to expect it to tell us everything, when Paul came to Corinth and led people to the Lord, in all likelihood, after they were baptized in water, he laid hands on them and they were baptized in the Spirit, probably the same day, probably within minutes of their water baptism. I think that in the early church, there were two ways of talking about your salvation. On one hand, you could talk about the essence of what it was that really saved you, namely faith, period, just faith.

The right kind of faith is what saves you. Paul was jealous over that truth. He wouldn't allow anyone to insert something like faith plus works, faith plus works of the law, faith plus this merit or whatever.

No merit was involved. You're saved by faith. The essence of your salvation is your faith.

On the other hand, they could talk more broadly, when they were not trying to defend that particular tenet. They could think more broadly of their whole conversion experience. And that conversion experience was a complex of events in most cases.

It involved repenting, believing, being water baptized, and generally, in my opinion, having hands laid upon them for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is my perception from reading Acts that this was the normal thing. When people wanted to receive Christ, they repented, they believed, they were baptized in water, they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, all in rapid succession.

The whole complex of events could happen within a few minutes in some cases. So that when they talk about what saved them or how they came into the body of Christ, they could either speak of the most essential thing about salvation, especially if Paul is defending it against some kind of works, righteousness, legalism, he'd have to stress faith, faith, faith. But when they're speaking in a less guarded way, they could easily speak of any part of that conversion experience, and it would call to mind the rest.

And I say that because if you look over at 1 Peter, 1 Peter chapter 3, in verse 21, after talking about those who were saved in the ark at the time of Noah's flood, in verse 21 he

says, there is also an antitype, which means that the flood and the ark and the people saved in it were a type. And the antitype, which is the fulfillment of that type, he says, there is now an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism. Now, in all likelihood, water baptism is very clearly in view, what he says, even baptism.

And people who are like the Church of Christ who believe you have to be water baptized to be saved, they use this verse a great deal because it's a good one for them. You know, baptism saves us. However, if we understand that the early Christians thought of the whole complex of events that happened at the time of their conversion, repentance, faith, water baptism, baptism of the Spirit, I think that in common conversation, in common speech, when a Christian looked back at his conversion, he thought of the day he was converted and the event, which had many aspects, when he was convicted and he repented, when he believed in Jesus for the first time and immediately was led down to the water and had hands laid upon him, that all of that was part of his salvation experience.

Now, if you pinned him down and said, which of those things is the essence of your salvation experience, they'd have to say, well, faith is. But all those things were part of the experience. And you could refer back to any one of them and it would call to mind, I think, the whole complex of events that were their conversion.

So Peter can say, baptism now saves us. And what he means is when we were baptized. And all that surrounded that, our conversion and everything, of which baptism was a part, that saves us like the people being in the ark saved them from the flood.

He just happens to mention the baptism part because it's a good parallel to the water and so forth, passing through the water and being saved. Therefore, when we got saved, we passed through the water, too. It's like sort of the anti-type of that.

And I believe he probably is referring to water baptism, but without trying to stress the point that getting saved happens by being baptized. But virtually everyone who was saved was baptized in the first century. And that's something we have to reckon with.

When Paul talks to people and says, now, we've all been baptized in the Holy Spirit, we have to realize he's not talking to us. He's talking to them. They all were.

It was normal in the apostolic church for everyone to experience these things as a normal part of their conversion. But that doesn't mean that 2,000 years later, after centuries of apostasy and neglect and so forth, that every Christian you're ever going to meet has been properly baptized or properly filled in the Holy Spirit. It may be, and I certainly believe an awful lot of Christians do have a normative New Testament experience, but it does not necessarily follow that all who have had a saving faith, now 2,000 years later, that all of them, regardless of what denomination or what circumstances they were saved in, they've all received adequate apostolic teaching

about baptism and the fullness of the Spirit, and there's been tremendous neglect in some quarters in that area.

So it is, I believe, possible to have Christians today who are really saved, but they're not normative. Now, this is a very controversial and unpopular thing to say. To say there is such thing as Christians who are not normative by New Testament standards.

And it's particularly unpopular among non-charismatics to hear charismatics say that. Because what I've just suggested to you is getting baptized in the Spirit is normative, and that means that Baptists or Methodists or Presbyterians who aren't baptized in the Spirit are not normative. Of course, that sounds a little insulting.

I don't mean it to be so. Although they themselves would say, Roman Catholics, who also consider themselves Christians, are not normative. You know, everyone thinks they're purer than someone else.

And this can either arise out of arrogance, or it can simply arise out of a desire to be true to the Word of God. They can just say, well, I read in the Word of God that this is a normal thing for Christians. I look around, it's not normal for the Christians I know.

So is it okay for me to say what the Bible says is what's supposedly normal, and what's not like the Bible is subnormal? That's where I'm coming from. It's not like, look at me, I'm the normal Christian. I am not.

In so many ways, I don't measure up to what the Bible says a Christian should be. And a lot of the biggest complaint I hear about charismatics from non-charismatics is that the charismatic idea of the baptism in the Spirit being separate from conversion creates two classes within the church, the haves and the have-nots. Anyone ever heard that complaint? That just creates two classes of the haves and the have-nots, and that certainly can't be of God that causes divisions in the church.

No, what causes divisions in the church is not that everyone has the same thing. What causes divisions in the church is lack of love. I mean, love is what unity is made of, and lack of love is what unity is destroyed by.

The fact of the matter is, the church is full of have and have-nots. Do you have the gift of prophecy? I don't. I guess you're a have and I'm a have-not.

Did Paul have the gift of apostleship? I don't. I guess I made him a have, I'm a have-not in that respect. There's some things I don't have.

Do you have total victory over... I won't name the areas of life that I don't have total victory over, but I mean, some of you do have total victory in areas that I don't. And I have total victory over areas like drinking, I couldn't care less. I've never even been tempted to drink.

Some Christians who love God as much as I do, they don't have total victory in that area. What I'm saying is the work of God is not the same in all people, and it shouldn't be threatening for us to admit. Some have one thing and some have another thing.

Now, I would like to say that normative Christianity is a life of total devotion to God, total prayerfulness, power, unbroken relationships of love and so forth, and unity in the body of Christ. I would say, judging by scriptural norms, we all fall short. I've never yet found a church or an individual, but I have met some individuals who have come pretty close, I'd have to say.

Let's just say a church. I've never seen a church. That's my mind, and certainly we're no exception here.

We're not a church, but our school certainly isn't on there. But I've never seen anything that measures up to what the New Testament says, but that doesn't condemn it all. It's just saying, well, that defines our goal.

That defines the challenge. That defines the direction we have to get to. The norm is over there, and we're way down here.

And when I was a Baptist, and I was not a charismatic, and someone told me there's a thing called the baptism of the Holy Spirit that you don't have, I didn't say, how dare you say I'm a have-not, and you're a have. You claim to be better than me? I thought, well, it looks like it's scriptural what they're saying. I guess I am a have-not.

I think I'd better become a have. I think that if the Bible says that's normal, that's good. I want that.

I didn't get all defensive and say, I like to be a have-not, and don't tell me I'm not okay as a have-not. As if what I am is normative and don't challenge me. The fact of the matter is, all of us should be able to read the Scripture and say, oh, wow, that's an area where I fall short.

I want to move forward there. There's an area where I'm not just like Jesus or Paul. That's an area I want to change in.

And if someone says, wow, there's this thing that I never heard about before, that the Bible calls the baptism of the Spirit. I want that. I need that.

I don't have that. I mean, why should that be so insulting or challenging? Why shouldn't they just say, wow, there's something else I can get from God. There's another blessing from God that is available to me from my arsenal of waging this war against the flesh and the devil and the world.

I don't know why people get upset at the suggestion that some Christians have

something that other Christians don't have, if the thing is taught in the Bible. Anyway, the question is, is it? And we've talked on other occasions, and we can't afford to do so now with our time, about scriptures that suggest that there is, in fact, the baptism of the Spirit is something that some people don't have at the point of conversion. Some people have it when they get converted, some people get it later.

And that's clear from the book of Acts. And I guess that's the best place we can find it, but it's also true in modern experience, it seems to me. But, what about this verse? Well, I'd like to suggest to you that there probably was not one Corinthian Christian who was unbaptized with water or unbaptized in the Holy Spirit.

After all, they've been converted under Paul's ministry. And I scarcely think that he would allow such neglect in something that was, in his mind, so important, so normative. And it seemed almost so routine in getting a person saved, to baptize in water and in the Holy Spirit.

And so, you know, Peter could talk about it as if every Christian is baptized in water. Well, let me tell you something. Not every Christian is.

Now, probably in the churches he wrote to, every Christian was. And he could talk to them as if they all had this universal experience of being water baptized. And it was associated with their getting saved, it was associated with their conversion experience.

He could talk about how water baptism saves us. I mean, not by itself, but the whole process of getting saved, which included water baptism for them. But a lot of people since then have gotten saved and didn't know to be baptized, or were just, you know, slack or whatever.

And it wasn't imposed, it wasn't taught. And, you know, you do find Christians today who haven't been baptized in water. That doesn't change the fact that the Bible speaks about water baptism as normative.

There are haves and have-nots in that respect, are there not? Don't you know some Christians who have not been baptized in water for one reason or another? Doesn't that make them a have-not in that particular area? And yet I don't know any Baptists, and I use Baptist because I was one, but I don't know any Baptists who would object to our making that distinction. As a Baptist, if I met someone who was converted and not baptized in water, I would have said, Oh, well you need to be baptized in water. Now suppose that unbaptized Christian said, What? You're making me in a category of have-nots because you've been water baptized and I haven't? I'd say, yeah, that's right.

I am. You need to be water baptized. I'm not condemning you, I'm just saying that's something you've apparently not known or neglected.

This is something the Bible teaches. So why would the same Baptist get upset? Someone

would say, oh, you know what, I know you've been baptized in water, but there's also Baptism in the Spirit. Well, no, don't tell me that I'm subnormal.

I'm not picking on the Baptists, because I'm just talking about who I was. But the thing is, this whole objection that saying some Christians have it and some Christians don't, or that in saying so you're somehow dividing the body of Christ into two classes. Well, truth always divides, the fact is.

The question is, do we love people? I love Christians who haven't been baptized in water. I love Christians who haven't been baptized in the Spirit. I love Christians who don't even have very many of the same doctrines I have.

I don't divide from them. I don't have any desire to divide from them. It's attitudes that divide people.

It's not being all the same. And one of the points Paul actually makes in 1 Corinthians 12 later is that's just the point. We are members of the body, but we're different.

We're not all the same. The eye can't say to the hand, I have no need of you, just because I'm an eye and you're a hand. We're so different, we've got nothing in common.

But we do. We're part of the same body. Differences are not what divide people.

It's lack of love that divides people. Now, as far as Paul's saying in 1 Corinthians 12, 13, For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slave or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. He's talking to an actual group of people of whom this is absolutely true.

It does not necessarily follow that there would never come a time where there were Christians who were not baptized in the Spirit. But that was not in the purview of his, it was not in the range of his consideration here. He's not talking to the 20th century Christians, he's talking to Corinthians of his own day, the people he knew himself, personally converted them.

And the question of whether there could ever be a circumstance different than theirs would have to be answered on other grounds, not on this verse. I'd also point out to you this. It has been said, and it is an arguable point, that even though we technically have the expression here, baptized in one Spirit, in one Spirit we've been baptized into the body, that he might not be talking about the same thing that both Jesus and John spoke of as the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

It's hard to know, because the term occurs seldom enough, and Paul, in many cases, seems to have his own vocabulary that is not used by other New Testament writers. He might, on this one occasion, be speaking of being baptized in the Spirit, in some sense a little differently than John the Baptist or Jesus used the term. We don't know that it was a

technical term.

It may have just been the way certain words fell together in expressing different points. We can't be 100% sure, but I would say this, that the expression used by John the Baptist and Jesus was baptized with the Holy Spirit. And it was, in contrast, being baptized with water.

John baptized with water, Jesus said in Acts 1.5. You should be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Now, of course, being baptized with water is the same thing as being baptized in water. And it could be argued that being baptized with the Holy Spirit is the same thing as being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Possibly so. Arguably so. But, also possibly not.

It's possible that Paul is making a different point about a different phenomenon. That is to say, he might not be describing in 1 Corinthians 12.13 what John and Jesus refer to as the baptism with the Holy Spirit since he doesn't use that exact language. After all, what he says we were baptized into is the body of Christ.

The word baptized means immersed. And the word, as we know, is used a number of ways in the New Testament besides literal immersion into water. The first sense in which baptized is used in the New Testament is John immersing people in water.

And Jesus later immersing people in water. However, we also have Jesus talking about John and James needing to be immersed or baptized with the baptism Jesus is going to receive which is a reference to his suffering and death. Remember when they said, can we sit at your right hand and left hand? He said, well can you be baptized with the baptism I am going to be baptized with? And drink of the cup that I am going to drink of? He's talking about his suffering.

Obviously he's using the word baptized metaphorically. He's not talking about being immersed in water or anything else. Immersed in suffering is really what it amounts to.

Being baptized with the Holy Spirit as opposed to baptized in water seems to be immersed in the Holy Spirit himself. Overwhelmed by the Spirit instead of a wave of water you're overwhelmed by a wave of the Spirit of God. That seems to be the concept that John the Baptist and Jesus are using because he's comparing it with immersion in water.

John is baptizing or immersing people in water. You should be immersed in the Holy Spirit. So that what you are being baptized into in that case is the Holy Spirit himself.

Just like people are baptized in water. They're baptized in the Holy Spirit. Whereas Paul's language here suggests he's talking about being baptized not into the Holy Spirit but into the body of Christ.

What we're being immersed into is the church. We're being immersed into the fellowship of the saints. The body of Christ.

We've been planted in it, immersed in it as it were. And it's the Holy Spirit who did that to us. The Holy Spirit has planted us or immersed us in the body of Christ.

Arguably this is a different concept altogether than what John and Jesus were talking about I'm going to use the other expression, baptized with the Holy Spirit. Now the reason it's confusing is because we who are charismatics I don't know that all of you are, but I am and I can speak for most charismatics in this respect We kind of use the words baptized with the Holy Spirit and baptized in the Holy Spirit interchangeably. And that's what maybe brings some confusion because it's not all together.

Certainly that's what's the case in the Bible. Paul uses the expression baptized in the Holy Spirit and that expression might not mean the same thing because it's actually into the body of Christ that the baptizing has taken place. Now seen this way then, if that is the case then verse 13 of 1 Corinthians 12 doesn't have anything to say about this second phenomenon called the baptism in the Holy Spirit that we usually speak of as putting us into the body of Christ.

He'd simply be saying that when we came into the body of Christ this was the Holy Spirit's doing. And everyone, Baptist or Pentecostal, agrees with that. When we got saved, the Holy Spirit is the one who regenerated us and gave us a place in the body of Christ.

And that altogether is a separate consideration than the issue of being baptized in the Holy Spirit in the sense of the Holy Spirit coming upon you and receiving power and those other things that we associate. I hope I haven't confused you with all the directions this discussion's gone, but all these things I think are considerations and none of them None of them require that Paul be arguing against the baptism of the Spirit as a separate experience from conversion. He could be talking about what we frequently talk about by that term but he could be simply saying the Corinthians, they were baptized in the Spirit into the body of Christ when they got saved.

They were baptized in the Spirit. But that doesn't mean that can't have been neglected by other Christians of other ages and need to be, you know, redressed. And as I said, it's possible he's not even talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

He's using that term here because he doesn't use the exact same terminology. Okay, so, let's go on to verse 14. For in fact, the body is not one member, but many.

Now he's clearly talking still about the human body because of the examples he gives but he has already mentioned that Christ is like this, the body of Christ is like this so he intends for us to make the application right across the board. When he says something

about the body, he means, you know, this is true of the body of Christ, the church. If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I am not of the body is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I am not of the body is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? And if the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as he pleased.

And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body, 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. Now, let me just try to clarify what Paul is saying in the two portions of this where he says, where he uses illustrations of hands and feet and eyes and so forth and nose. This is, of course, a part of his discussion of the gifts of the spirit.

Therefore, the functions of the body, the several different functions the function of the eye, the function of the hand, the function of the foot are all very different kinds of functions they correspond, in his analogy, to the different kinds of gifts people have. Each gift equips you to make some contribution to the overall benefit of the body of Christ. If you prophesy or work miracles or speak in tongues or interpret tongues or give teachings, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, whatever.

Whatever you may do, you have a contribution to make to the overall welfare of the body just like a hand does or an eye or a foot. They all make very different contributions. But who would wish to be without any of them? It's quite clear that the hand and the eye, the foot and the eye these members of the body are so different from one another that if we had never seen a complete body if we were totally ignorant of how a complete body would fit together and simply saw an eye and a hand dissociated from a body we would not have any reason to believe that they belong to each other in any sense.

I mean, we'd think they were totally different organisms. In fact, they're not different organisms, they're different organs. But the different organs are so different in the function they perform.

The eye can see, a hand can't see. An eye is a very specialized thing, designed and gifted to provide vision to the body. The hand doesn't have that capability at all.

Nonetheless, the hand is one of the most tremendously engineered things. I mean, all of us have seen, no doubt on television or in real life mechanical hands. Even mechanical hands that people who've lost an actual hand have received or even in working with highly volatile nuclear material or something like that some engineer is working behind a window with some mechanical hand up there trying to manipulate things.

They can do it, but it's not like this hand. I mean, with all the technology and the millions of dollars that can be put into it it can't feel anything. I'm just amazed how much we take

for granted the incredible technology that is even any one part of our body.

The eye, nothing like it has ever been duplicated technologically. The hand, I mean, I can reach into my pocket and I've got some coins in there. I can tell by feeling whether this is a dime or a penny.

You know? I mean, it's got incredible sensitive instruments here. And I don't think they've made anything that can do anything like that. Now, this is incredibly gifted.

All hands are to do tremendous things. Probably every bit as gifted as the eye. But it can't do anything that the eye can do.

And the eye can't do anything that the hand can do. The eye can't pick things up. It can't work tools.

It can't turn knobs. It can't do anything. They are not like each other.

They make entirely separate contributions to overall well-being of the body. But the body would be the poor, incredibly poor, for the lack of hands or eyes. And so is the body of Christ.

Now, in the body of Christ, I listen to Christian preachers on the radio sometimes. And some of them I like their style. Some of them I don't like their style very much.

I mean, there's a lot of different kinds of preaching. But a long time ago, I got to a place where I'm not very critical. I mean, I disagree with a lot of what I hear and so forth.

But I can appreciate, you know, they're reaching someone. They got to ministry to someone. There's people who are getting saved.

And there's people who are getting strengthened and launched through that ministry. I might strongly disagree with some of the things they say. But I've come to appreciate the diversity.

Because I'm not the kind of teacher that everybody can enjoy listening to or, you know, even tolerate. But the people who get something out of my ministry wouldn't get something out of some other people's ministry, maybe. There are very different kinds of gifts.

And it would be quite unchristian to do exactly what the body of Christ has frequently done. And that is to separate and say, well, I like this style better than that style. Start a whole congregation over here that we all like this style.

Some of us like this style. We'll separate. We're not part of them.

We're not of them. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you. Now, there's

two things that Paul says about the body of Christ by making reference to these analogies to the parts of a body.

The first is in verse 15. He asks rhetorical questions, the obvious answer to which is no. He says in verse 15 and 16, if the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, because I'm not the eye, I'm not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? Now, the question is, if the foot, which is very different than a hand, or if the ear, which is very different from an eye, should say, well, based on these tremendous differences between me and the eye or between me and the foot, I suggest we're not part of the same body.

We are too diverse from one another, too different. We have to part company. We just can't get along.

We're not part of the same body. This diversity that we see between ourselves must necessarily result in disunity, is the suggestion. Now, Paul is denying that this is the case.

He says we would never make such a conclusion about the parts of a body. If the hand should say, well, I'm so different from the foot, we really have very little in common. I mean, we both have five digits.

I guess that makes us more similar than, say, me and the appendix or something. But still, very, very different uses and functions and stuff. Therefore, I'm not part of the same body as the foot.

I'm part of a different body. Does that make it so just because they say so, Paul says? No, of course it doesn't. What he is saying here is that diversity does not necessitate disunity.

Very important point. Diversity does not necessitate disunity. And the flip side of that, which is also taught the same way, is that unity is not the same thing as uniformity.

Unity exists with all the members of the body. They're all one. But they're not uniform in the sense of all being alike.

There's diversity. So that unity does not mean uniformity. And this is so important because a lot of people complain.

They say, well, there's so much disunity in the body of Christ. We need to have unity. And unity means everyone's going to do things my way.

Because everyone has to be uniform if we're going to have unity around here. Everyone's got to think the same way. Everyone's got to do the same thing.

Everyone's got to worship the same style. Everyone's got to like the same songs. I can't

see why that would be.

That is a carnal concept of unity. That says, well, the only way we can really have unity is if we're alike enough to really appreciate each other. If I don't really appreciate the kind of contribution you make, then we can't be one.

That's what Paul's saying isn't the case. The eye can't say that about the ear or the hand can't say that about the foot. They're very different from each other.

They're very diverse. But their diversity does not cancel out their unity. They are one in one body.

And so unity does not require uniformity. Then the other thing he says in making these kinds of illustrations, in verse 21 he says, This stresses the point of interdependence, needing each other. The eye is a very valuable part of the body.

But it's not valuable enough to say I don't need any other parts. I'm different from the hand, but I don't care. I'll just start my little eye fellowship.

I'll just start a fellowship of eyes. Because we are the church with vision. We've got a vision and no one else does.

And then the hand says, well, have it your way. We'll start a church of hands. We're the workers.

We'll do all the work for the body of Christ. We're into good works. We're into feeding the poor and housing the homeless and so forth.

We're the hands. And we're not of you because you're visionaries and we're doers over here. And the basic attitude is we don't need what you are or what you do.

We're quite fine by ourselves. We've got a very nice little work. We've got it well defined.

And we know what we do. And we think it's the most important thing. In fact, it's important enough that we don't need anything else.

No, you can't do that. The eye can't say to the hand, I have no need of you. God has not constructed the body of Christ in such a way that one person has all the gifts and therefore doesn't need any others.

And he's done this, as a matter of fact, in order that we might be compelled to unity. Because, you see, I would never suggest for the moment that what we do here at this school is all that needs to be done in the body of Christ. Far from it.

For example, we do not do a lot of financial giving to missions. Not because we wouldn't. We just don't have much to give.

But there are groups that do have a lot of money and they do give a lot. If we were the only part of the body, missions would suffer for it. Now, we sometimes, some people from here, go on the mission field and no doubt some of you in your lives from now on will support missionaries.

But the point is, there are some that have a much more tremendous gift of giving than we have in terms of finance, simply because they have more money. I feel that we provide a good service of teaching, but we don't have an anointing and miracles here. I mean, we have seen miracles.

God has answered prayers in miraculous ways on occasion, but it's not the most common phenomenon in this ministry. I don't know of any prophets in our ministry. I'm not a prophet.

I don't know that we have any on our staff. In fact, I suspect we don't. I mean, I need other prophets in my life.

They're not all here. I don't have any particular anointing in deliverance ministry. I've cast a few demons out, but I'm not great at it, that's for sure.

I don't think it's particularly a gift I've got. And I personally think that if there was someone who was demonized, I'd be looking around town to see if there's someone who's got that anointing. Because I don't pretend that we're the whole body of Christ, and what amazes me is how many churches are willing to make that pretense.

They don't do so officially, because they're more enlightened than that. They know that if they are the Baptist church, or the Presbyterian church, or the Mennonite church, or the Pentecostal church, or whatever, they know that they're not the whole body of Christ. Because, I mean, that's orthodox to know that.

It's orthodox to know that all Christians are part of the body of Christ. Their doctrine is better than that, than to think they're the whole body of Christ. They just live like they are the only part of the body of Christ in town.

I mean, it isn't part of their theology to say they are, but that's just the way they live. They have no need of any of these other groups. Now, occasionally, pastors from various churches get together once a month to talk about things.

We call these ministerial associations. I was part of one in Bandon. I've been to the one here in town.

Pastors get together to show their unity. But most of the time, this is more of a symbolic show than a real one. I know, because I've been at many of these meetings.

They get together and they try to find something they have in common, a common

interest about, to talk about. Well, what are you going to do about transients here in town? Do they come to your door and ask for money? Yeah, they come to mine too. Well, let's group together and start a fund.

Any transient comes to any door, you send them to that pastor. He's the guy who holds the purse, and he'll call us, and we'll make sure. And they do find some united way to work in some ways together.

And it's symbolic, and it's encouraging in measure. And it happens once a month. But in day-to-day activity, there's basically no real interaction outside their own group.

They act as if their whole group has all the gifts, and there's no real need for any other groups. And I, frankly, have not noticed any church around having all the gifts. I know a lot of them that act as if they do.

But I've been to a lot of churches, and I think all of them have something nice to contribute. There's not a church in this town that I've been to that doesn't have something positive to contribute. But there's not one of them in this town that I've ever seen, or in any town that I've ever seen, that's got it all, and needs nothing else that some other group has a strength in to contribute.

And I feel that that's part of what Paul's saying. That essentially is what Paul's saying in verse 21. I can't say to the hand, I have no need of you.

You do need the other parts that are different from you. Each one makes its own unique contribution. As all see their mutual dependency, they function properly.

You know, I have been on occasion, not very often, because people who know me couldn't make this statement, but I've been on occasion accused of being independent. What they mean by that is organizationally, I don't feel the need to be covered by a church. I believe in parachurch things being valid.

I think it's okay for a ministry to arise that doesn't have a local church overseeing it. This doesn't please everybody, and some people think that that's too independent. I was part of a church at one time that accused me of having an independent spirit.

I'm not so sure what's wrong with an independent spirit. That can mean something good or it can mean something bad, in my opinion. If an independent spirit means a person who thinks, literally, that he has no need of any other members of the Body of Christ, that he's the whole package, and the church would be better off if he was the only leader because he's got it all, and there's no one else that he has anything to receive from.

He's self-contained, self-sufficient, he's got all the gifts. That's a very bad thing. In fact, that's very contrary to what Paul is saying here.

We all need each other. If independence, however, means I can walk with God even if I don't have the support of a whole bunch of people encouraging me all the time or overseeing me, I can live a holy life even if I don't have a council of men looking over my shoulder every few minutes. Frankly, I think Paul had that kind of an independent spirit.

I think it's desirable. What if you were put in solitary confinement for three years like Richard Rumboldt and you didn't have such an independent spirit? If you were dependent on your holiness and your obedience and your love and your spirituality on some group that you're formally identified with and you need that for your spiritual survival, then there's a lot of situations you could be in, like on a mission field, pioneering some missionary thing, or in prison or something, where you simply don't have that support. If you really need it, then you're in trouble because you don't have it.

Of course, we all know that real missionaries who go out and pioneer things do so because they don't need. They are, in fact, independent in that positive respect. They are able to walk with God.

Of course, they appreciate the support of the body of Christ, but even if they're alone, they can walk with God. Paul was that way, and I don't think that he's anything other than normal in that respect. Now, in my own case, just in case anyone wonders, I'm extremely dependent.

I can't do anything for myself. Honestly, I don't. I can teach, and that's all I can do.

I really can't do anything else. I can't fix my car. I can't fix my toaster.

I can't repair my roof. I can't pay my bills, except for people who have the gift of giving coming along. I am totally, a totally interdependent individual.

That's why I say it's not that often that people accuse me of being independent, because I'm the most dependent guy I know. I would die if it wasn't for people in the body of Christ who have different gifts than mine. But this is what Paul wants us to understand, and that's precisely true.

We do need the body of Christ. We fully need the body of Christ. Not for our spiritual survival, hopefully.

Hopefully, we can walk with God. We can hear from God. We can obey God.

We can survive in solitary confinement and not lose a bit of our sanctification in it, because we don't need people for that. What we need people for is for the group effort, for our physical and our functional well-being as the body of Christ, to perform what God wants done on the earth. We can't say, I've got it all, the rest of you, who needs you? We all need what everyone else has to offer, and corporately, the body of Christ can get the job done.

But the eye cannot do the function of the whole body, the hand cannot do the function of the whole body, and even the eye and the hand together can't do the function of the whole body, because you need some other parts. And Paul begins to talk about those other parts here in verse 22. He says, No, much rather those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary, and those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty.

Now, I'm not sure what he says in verse 22, the members of the body that are weaker, and the ones that are less honorable, and the ones that are unrepresentable. I don't know if these are three different ways of talking about the same parts. I don't think we have any difficulty identifying what our unrepresentable parts are.

I mean, there are parts of our body we simply are not at liberty to present to the public. They are private parts. And he talks about how we place greater modesty upon these parts.

Now, whether he means the same parts when he talks about those that are less honorable, we bestow the greater honor. I mean, maybe you have a big nose, and you feel like that's an ugly thing, so you'd bestow greater honor by getting plastic surgery, right? I don't know if that's what he's talking about. Or if he's saying that parts that you'd be embarrassed because of modesty, because they are private parts, you'd be embarrassed to have them show you.

You take more care to cover them. I mean, you don't take as much care to comb your hair before you come to class. It's not one of your unrepresentable parts.

But you do make sure you have your pants on, you know, before you come to class. You bestow the greater care and the greater honor on certain parts for the very reason that they aren't presentable. There are certain parts of the body of Christ that are... I mean, I'm talking about people who, because of their immaturity or whatever, they're a little embarrassing, but that means you put out greater effort in their case to cover for them and to, of course, include them and so forth.

And what Paul is saying, there's really no part of the body that doesn't need and deserve some care from the rest of the body. When he talks about the weaker parts, he says they are necessary. I'm not sure what he means.

Maybe he just means that some people have... I mean, almost everyone has some part of the body that's not optimal. I mean, people have weak eyesight, like I do, or weak muscles, like I do, or something else weak, like I do. And, I mean, they're just weak, but necessary.

I'm necessary to me, at least. And no matter how weak certain parts of my body are, I'm

not ready to part with any of them. And the idea here is that there are parts of the body we might be inclined to not credit with a great deal of importance, but you wouldn't do that with your physical body.

The weak parts, the dishonorable parts, the private parts, those things, you don't part with them. You still keep them around and you do what's necessary to accommodate their special needs. Okay? Verse 24.

But our presentable parts have no need. That is, we don't have any special need to give special attention to parts of the presentable. We pay more attention to making sure that we've done the necessary covering of unpresentable parts than we do of presentable parts.

But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it. Perhaps he's referring to what he was saying in Chapter 1, where God has chosen the weak things and the foolish things of the world so that no flesh would glory in His sight, that God actually seems to favor and bestow more grace upon those that are weaker and more vulnerable and less honorable in the world's sight. Having given greater honor to that part that lacked it, that there should be no schism in the body.

That means no division. That is, that God has so constructed the body that each part is really interdependent on all the other parts, or at least on some of the other parts, so that we don't have the ability to break off from the body of Christ and say, well, I guess I don't need the rest. Unfortunately, because Christians, I guess, haven't gotten the revelation of what Paul's saying here, they have made the mistake of thinking, in fact, they are independent from the rest.

If not individuals, maybe as congregations. By the way, I guess that raises the question of whether a congregation is a complete microcosm of the body of Christ or not. I guess some people think of their church that way.

It would be very nice to be in a church that was. And I think the Corinthian church, for example, and the churches in Paul's day were, in fact, microcosms of the whole body. But you see, all the Christians in town were in them.

When you've got all the Christians in town dividing into congregations based on their tastes and preferences, you're not likely to find any one of these little groups that's got everything. Now, if all the groups were together, you'd probably find a complete microcosm of all the gifts necessary for the ministry to be done in this town. And that's why it's important for us to have a holistic approach to the body of Christ on a local level, that although we may, in fact, be led to fellowship more frequently with one group than with all the others, there needs to be an appreciation for and acceptance of and a dependency upon other groups in the same town that aren't the one we're principally part of, because we are part of the same body, whether they know it or not.

For example, it seems to me like in Paul's day, it would have not been strange, suppose he was living in McMinnville and all these different congregations were here. I think if one congregation, their pastor died, it would be quite natural for him to call another congregation and say, Hey, you got any extra pastors? We need a pastor over here. We need somebody to come teach in our pulpit.

Of course, that would never happen here. I mean, not in some permanent sense, it seems. Or, better yet, hey, we got some poor people in our church.

We know you got some rich people in your church. Could you send over some money? I really doubt that that would happen very often in the present way that churches look at each other. Get money out of your own church.

Hit up your own people for it. It's your problem. No, it's the body of Christ problem.

If one suffers, all suffer. And if there's some financial crisis that someone in this little church over in this corner is facing, then the big church over here that's got a whole bunch of butts, they should say, Oh, wow, the body is hurting over here. We got some butts we'll send over.

It doesn't happen often enough, let's just put it that way. There is some effort, I think, made in some cases to cooperate like that. But there certainly isn't the total function of the body as if it's really one body in town, which I think it would have been Paul's day.

And when it didn't, in Corinth, he rebuked him for it. When he began to say, I'm a Paul, I'm a Paulist, and so forth. Now, we got to finish up here real quick.

So he says in verse 26, and if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. If one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. You don't just rejoice when you get honored, you rejoice when someone else gets honored.

At least love would have you do so. Now, you are the body of Christ and members individually, and God has appointed these in the church. First apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles and gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

Here's another list, like the one earlier in the chapter, but not exactly the same. Here we have administrations added to the list, and helps. Helps is probably just doing practical, helpful things, which some people are very gifted at doing.

Administrations probably has to do with leadership, because it's a word in the Greek that only appears once in the whole New Testament. It's kubernetesis is the Greek word that's here translated, administrations. Literally, outside the New Testament, where it is found, it's not found elsewhere in the New Testament, but in the Greek language it referred to the helmsman of a ship, a person who was steering the ship.

So in using it here, he's probably using it metaphorically for those who provide leadership. Elders, perhaps, pastors, I don't know, and varieties of tongues. Now he says, are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, are all workers of miracles? The suggestion is, the answer is no.

Likewise with the questions, do all have the gifts of healings, do all speak with tongues, do all interpret? The answer again is no. But earnestly desire the best gifts, and yet I show you a more excellent way, which of course, a more excellent way is, he's talking about love, which is the subject of the next chapter. Now, do all people do these things? No, but keep desiring, keep desiring the better gifts.

Now, when he says, do all speak with tongues, this raises the question, can every Christian really have a devotional prayer language, can they all speak in tongues? Many people say no, however in this case, I think the thought is, do all make this contribution to the body of Christ? I mean, he's talking about offices, he's talking about people who make regular contributions when the church gathers together. Some are prophets, I mean, it's one thing to prophesy, it's another thing to be a prophet. A prophet regularly prophesies, a teacher regularly teaches, everyone teaches in one way or another, one on one or in small groups, there's hardly any Christian who doesn't teach.

But not all are teachers, people who, their principal gift and contribution they always make is teaching. Likewise, speaking in tongues is like that. There are many who speak in tongues, myself included, who have never ever spoken in tongues as a way of ministering to the body of Christ, coupled with an interpretation, I've never done that.

I don't think I ever will, it's not what I do. Not all do that. But he's not raising the question about special private abilities, he's talking here about functions when the church gathers in the body of Christ.

Now we'll take the next chapter next time, of course, we'll have to break at this point.