

# THE SUM IS GREATER THAN ITS PARTS / Sunday, May 17, 2015

Unifying Topic: **THE SPIRIT CREATES ONE BODY**

## Lesson Text

I. **Room For Everyone** (1 Corinthians 12:14)

II. **Weakness In The Body** (1 Corinthians 12: 15-19)

III. **Honor Others** (1 Corinthians 12:20-31)

**The Main Thought:** For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** Organizations are composed of several interrelated, interdependent functional parts. Why is it important to value all the parts? In his letter, Paul tells the Corinthian church that all spiritual gifts are necessary for its efficient operation.

**Lesson Aim:** To learn that the body of Christ, like the human body, is made up of many different parts which are to function as one.

**Life Aim:** To learn how various members of the body of Christ support all the other members.

## HISTORY:

**12:11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.** All spiritual gifts just covered are given by one and the same Spirit, not from any other source. The Spirit knows what gifts will edify the church most and what gifts can be most effective to reach the world and to minister to the desperate needs of all mankind. One believer has one gift and another believer has another gift, but both have come from the same Spirit of God.

**12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.**

Paul uses the human body to illustrate many different parts all working together for the good of the whole. This passage is to stress the unity of the church. The church is said to be a body; a body of many parts or members. The church is compared to the human body throughout the whole passage. The human body is a picture of Christ and His church. The picture is practical and descriptive: one organism, one person, one being, one life, yet it has many members or parts to it enabling it to function, so also as Christ.

**12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free;—** Paul reminds us that the gifts are given to unite us in our ministry in the one body and for the good of the whole church. The Holy Spirit bestows these gifts *"as He wills"* and not as we will. The human body and the body of Christ picture what the Holy Spirit does.

1. The Holy Spirit baptizes believers into one body, that is, into Christ Himself. When we really believe in Christ...
  - the Holy Spirit immerses us into the death of Jesus Christ. God actually counts us as *"in Christ"*, as *"in the body of Christ."* God sees us as having already died *in the body of Christ*. Therefore, having died in Christ, we never have to die.
  - the Holy Spirit immerses us into the resurrection of Christ. God counts and sees us as having already been raised from the dead *in the body of Christ*. Therefore, we already have the new life of Christ, both abundant and eternal life.
  - the Holy Spirit immerses us into the purpose of Jesus Christ. God counts and sees us *in the body of Christ* working and carrying out the very same purpose as His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit (one Spirit) takes us and baptizes us into the body of Christ (one body) whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free. God sees and accepts, counts and credits us as *in Christ*; as *in the body of Christ*. God has to see us *"in Christ"*, *in the body of Christ* in order to accept and approve us. When God looks at the body of Christ, He sees us in Christ; then God accepts and approves us—no matter who we are. Paul's point is that many different parts with different functions can work together in unity with a common purpose. The common baptism and the common indwelling of the Spirit made people one in spite of their different backgrounds; their different nationalities; whether slave or free; and in spite of their different gifts and functions in the church.

2. **...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit;** —that is, the Spirit has entered our bodies; He dwells within the hearts and lives of all believers; He is immersed or placed into the lives and bodies of believers, therefore we are all filled with the "*living water*" of the Spirit.

## LESSON:

### 1 Corinthians 12:14 Room For Everyone

**12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.** The body is not one significant member by itself, but many members—every member being important. Some of the Corinthians felt so highly about their particular gift, that they thought the church needed no other gift. Others felt that their gift was so lowly that the body wouldn't miss it. The point is: the body has many members—all important and there's room for everyone!

### 1 Corinthians 12: 15-19 Weakness In The Body

**12:15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?**— Using the analogy of the body, Paul emphasizes the importance of each church member. If a seemingly insignificant part is taken away, the whole body becomes less effective. Thinking your gift is more important than someone else's is spiritual pride.

1. Each member is necessary. The foot may not be as gifted as the hand in handling things, but the foot is still part of the body.

**12:16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?**—

2. Each member has an essential function. The ear may not be able to envision things like the eye can, but the ear is still part of the body. The eye, the ear, and the nose—they all have their function. None can do the function of the other. They are still of the body.

**12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?**— If the whole body were only an eye, it would be a freak, inoperative, unfunctional, and useless; it would not be able to hear. It is the same if the whole body was for hearing, how would it smell? God gave the body the ability to hear and to smell in their distinguished parts. The same is true in the church. If everyone were tongue-speaking, who would discern spirits, prophecy, or work miracles? If everyone were the preacher, who would teach, heal, or interpret?

**12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.** "*Every one*" of them; "*every member*" has been set in the church by God and gifted by God for an essential function. Paul stresses the sovereignty of God in this process. The eye sees because God gave it the ability to see. The ear hears because God gave it the ability to hear. It is the same as in the church. The placement and gifts of each member are determined by the Lord, and no gift or placement is to be coveted by any other member.

**12:19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?**— If only one member existed, and all were one member doing its one gift, the body could not exist. Of course, there would be no **body**. So it is with the church. If there is only one member in the church and doing his gift, he would be the significant one; the most important person around. But where would the church be; the body be? The point is: the church is not one significant and important person. The church is many members—all significant and important, despite the diversity and roles they play. The church is still one body. The ability of the body to operate is determined by the number and efficiency of its members. The more the members of the body (church) function and function efficiently, the more the body (church) can do.

### 1 Corinthians 12:20-31 Honor Others

**12:20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.** As it is, there are many parts, but there is only one body.

**12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.** The

other problem is arrogance on the part of those who had the more impressive gifts or ministries. The eye can't say to the hand, I don't need you, and the head can't say to the feet, I don't need you. The feet carry the head where it needs to go, and the hands perform what the eye sees to do. Those who cut weeds around the parking lot or clean the restrooms are making possible the setting where the preacher can share the gospel. He needs them and they need him.

**12:22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:**— The word "*feeble*" means sick or sickly. The weaker members (less gifted) are actually more necessary. It shows that in appearance the lesser members may seem unimportant, but they are not; they are essential to the body of Christ. Some members of the Corinthian church were experiencing what so many believers experience—insignificant. Some who are less gifted feel they are unimportant to the body of Christ. God probably sends such people to test our love as well as to minister to us in ways we never imagined. Congregations often respond to such a person with special love, protection, and affirmation.

**12:23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.** In fact, the average layman who serves as a personal worker, although he is never seen by the crowds, is much more essential to decisions as the evangelist who is in the center of the scene. The prayer warrior is much more essential to the strength of the church as the most eloquent preacher who fills the pulpit. Those members with lesser functions; the less honorable ones are to be given plentiful respect. Those unpresentable; uncomely parts of the body are to be bestowed greater honor.

**12:24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked.** God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. The word "*tempered*" means to mix, combine, and blend together. And God has done that. He has tempered the body together in such a manner: the gifted, combined and blended together with those who are not as gifted.

1. God has tempered or blended the members together to keep them from clashing.

Sometimes the more honorable are those who are never seen, those who go about their ministry for the Lord, using their gifts and functioning within the church as He has ordained.

**12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.** The word "*schism*" means division, split, or rift. There should be no jealousy, pride, or divisiveness within the church; for God has gifted every believer to complement the others. God has gifted all to function together in harmony.

2. God has tempered or blended the members together to create a natural care for one another. The words "*same care*" means same concern should be shown to one member as shown to another member.

**12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.** If the team is in a relay race, they are accounted as one team. One member suffer, they all suffer; if they win, all win and are honored, so it is when a member of the human body suffers, the whole body suffers, and when a member of the human body is honored, the whole body rejoices. The church is one body, it suffers and rejoices together. The body is to walk through the experience of life together having the same concern—suffering and rejoicing with every member, looking after and caring for every member in the same way.

**12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.** Each believer is a member of the body of Christ and has his own place.

**12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.** The church is an assembly for God to operate His administration. God has set and gifted each member to step into their role as He administers.

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

1. *First apostles* – a representative, an ambassador, a person sent out into one country to represent another country. Three things about the apostle;
  1. He belongs to the One who has sent him out.
  2. He is commissioned to be sent out.
  3. He possess all the authority and power of the One who sends him out.
2. *secondarily prophets* – receives revelation to publicly speak under the inspiration of God’s Spirit to an individual or in the church.
3. *thirdly teachers* – the gift to instruct believers in the truth of God and His Word. It is the gift to root and ground people in doctrine, reproof, correction, and righteousness. it is the truth that was according to the apostles’ teaching and the prophets’ revelation.
4. *after that miracles* – the works of miraculous power, other than healings which is against the laws of nature.
5. *then gifts of healings* – refer to physical, emotional, and spiritual healing.
6. *helps* – persons who are always ready to jump in to be of assistance to the needy, shut-ins, poor, and disabled.
7. *governments* – enjoy organizing, overseeing business matters, dealing with details and generally making sure the work of the local church runs smoothly.
8. *diversities of tongues* – various kinds of dialect manifested by the Spirit of God.

**12:29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?–**

**12:30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?–** The answer is obvious – No! God has not gifted all believers with the same gift.

**12:31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.** "*Covet*" means to desire, yearn for, crave. There is a legitimate covetousness—that is, the best gifts, which leads a person to more effectively serve the Lord. Yet, Paul says *‘I show unto you a more excellent way; something much higher; a quality that surpasses all the gifts.’* This more excellent way is the subject of the next chapter.

## **SUMMARY:**

The body is not one member, but many (v.14)

Though many members, yet one body, <sup>1</sup>Paul illustrates his point by comparing the different parts of the human body—the foot, the hand, the ear, the eye—to the different parts of the church. God placed them as He willed in the body. It would not be a body if all the parts were the same (w.15-19).

As it is, there are many parts, but there is only one body. The illustration with parts of the human body shows that each member needs the other members, and no member can afford to become independent. No member can say *“I have no need of thee”* (v.20-21). No member can say that others are not important. When a part of the human body becomes independent, you have a problem that often leads to sickness and death. The members of the body which seem to be weaker are very necessary (w.21-23). God has blended all the different members of the body into one body, and its members to have mutual concern for each other. A difference in care causes division. When one suffer, all suffer; and when one rejoices all rejoice (w.24-26). You are the body of Christ, and individually are members of it. God has appointed various functions in the church (w.27-28). Paul uses rhetorical questions to illustrate that not everyone has the same function (w.29-30). Certainly it was proper to desire the best gifts, yet Paul will show them a more excellent way (v.31).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/spiritual-gifts-that-unite/>  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>