

The Wreckage and the Fire Pt 19

No Unnecessary Parts

Why Every Member Matters

1 Corinthians 12:1-27 | Part One

1 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV) - *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

1 Corinthians 12:18 (ESV) - *God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.*

1 Corinthians 12:22 (ESV) - *The parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.*

Before I start talking about the manifestations and gifts of the Holy Spirit for the next few weeks I need to bare my heart with you.

I believe that we have become overly fascinated with the gifts of the Spirit, when we must first become consumed with the heart of the Spirit.

Much of the Spirit-filled, Pentecostal, and charismatic world has gradually shifted its focus from transformation to demonstration, from Christ to personalities, and from serving the Body to showcasing spiritual experiences.

The gifts were never given to build platforms, create celebrities, or provide spiritual entertainment. They were entrusted to the Church so that Christ would be exalted,

believers would be strengthened, the lost would be reached, and the Body would be built up in love.

It is time for the Church to return to God's original intent. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not badges of spirituality. They are tools of ministry. They are not evidence of spiritual maturity. They are expressions of God's grace.

The greatest evidence of the Holy Spirit is not what flows through our hands, but what has been formed in our hearts. When the gifts once again serve love instead of ego, humility instead of hype, and the glory of Christ instead of the glory of man, the Church will experience the kind of healthy, powerful revival the New Testament describes. –
OPEN IN PRAYER

Introduction – (Want the pics side by side) - On February 1, 2003, the **(Put up Pic before explosion) Space Shuttle Columbia** disintegrated upon re-entry into the atmosphere, killing all **seven crew members (Put up Pic)**. The cause was not the engine, not the navigation system, not the crew compartment. **It was thermal protection tiles, each weighing less than one pound, the part of the shuttle most people could not have named if asked.** A gap in those tiles let heat through at three thousand degrees Fahrenheit. The wing failed. **The whole machine came apart (Put up Pic of Blowing up).**

The most sophisticated flying machine ever built was brought down by the failure of its most overlooked component.

Paul had written the theology of that disaster two thousand years earlier. The Corinthians had ranked their spiritual gifts. **The dramatic and visible gifts were prized. The quieter gifts were dismissed. And Paul addresses a church where some members felt indispensable and others felt invisible and tells them both groups had missed the nature of what the Spirit was doing.**

A church that ranks its members by the visibility of their gifts totally misunderstands the purpose and the person who gave them.

Let's look at a couple of things and see if we can locate ourselves in the Corinthian explosion: **The source, the structure, and the scandal** of how God arranges His body.

1. The Source: One Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 (NLT) - You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols...no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all...A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other...He alone decides which gift each person should have.

Paul opens with a contrast most readers move past too quickly. He says: you know what it was like before. You were pagans. You were led to mute idols.

- **apago** - led away as a prisoner - **the language of captivity**, of being carried off with no consent and no freedom
- In your former life, a spirit led you the way a guard leads a prisoner: with no input from you and no freedom in you.

The first thing Paul establishes about the Holy Spirit is the contrast. He does not lead you as a prisoner. He leads you as a son.

- Verse 3 - **Kurios Iesous** - **Jesus is Lord** - the oldest creed in Christianity
 - *It predates every council, every catechism, every systematic theology*
 - *"No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit"*
- *not the words, the confession*

The Spirit's primary work is not giving supernatural abilities; it is making the Lordship of Jesus real inside a human soul.

- Every gift is **downstream of that interior work**

The Holy Spirit is not primarily the One who gives you supernatural gifts. He is the One who makes Jesus Lord inside you. Every gift flows from that!

Verses 4-6 - the Trinitarian architecture of spiritual gifts:

- *Different gifts - same Spirit*

- *Different service - same Lord*
- *Different activities - same God empowering all of them*

Very Important Words in the Passage:

***phanerosis* = manifestation** - not an ability given to a person but the Spirit making Himself visible through a person for someone else's benefit.

- **You do not own your spiritual gift. You are the address where the Spirit chooses to make Himself visible in a particular moment for a particular person.**

***bouletai* - as He determines** - sovereign, intentional, not random, not earned, not deserved.

Two errors this destroys simultaneously:

- Error 1: I can acquire the gifts I want through sufficient prayer or discipline
- Error 2: Some people have gifts and some do not, based on how much God loves them

Both errors make the gifts about the person -- Paul says they are about the sovereign will of the Spirit

Your gift is not a reward for your devotion. It is a sovereign assignment for someone else's deliverance.

Gordon Fee - God's Empowering Presence, 1994 - *The Spirit does not give you something to keep. He shows up through you to accomplish something for someone who needs what only He*

can provide. **The gift, properly understood, is an event, not an endowment.**

My gift is not about me. My gift is the Spirit making Himself visible through me for someone who needs Him.

2. The Structure: One Body

1 Corinthians 12:12-20 (NLT) - *The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So, it is with the body of Christ...If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body...God has put each part just where he wants it.*

Paul shifts from theology to anatomy, and in doing so he addresses two spiritual crises that were present in Corinth simultaneously. They are mirror images of each other.

- Crisis 1 - the member who denies their own membership (vv.15-16)
 - The Corinthians with **quieter gifts concluded they were unnecessary**
 - They compared their function to more visible members **and found themselves insufficient**

Your denial of your membership does not remove you from the body. It just means the body carries you while you argue about whether you belong.

- Crisis 2 -- the member who dismisses others (v.21)

- "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you"
- The Corinthians with visible gifts made them into status markers and spiritual rankings

Paul's answer to both crises is the same. Go back to the design:

ethen - God placed - aorist active indicative; decisive, completed, sovereign; not provisional, not up for renegotiation

- "God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose" (v.18)
- **Three things this destroys:**
 - The idea that your placement is accidental
 - The idea that your placement reflects your preferences
 - The idea that someone else's assessment of your value can override God's placement

God did not consult the congregation about where to place you. He placed you where the body needs you.

Your assignment in the body was not determined by your personality or a spiritual gifts inventory. It was determined by a sovereign god who saw exactly what the body needed and put you there on purpose.

N.T. Wright - Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 2013 - *In a Roman world organized by hierarchy and the systematic ranking of human beings by birth and social standing, a community where the foot and the hand were equally necessary was a direct challenge to everything Rome stood for. The body*

*of Christ was an alternative society announcing by its very structure that **the kingdom of God reorganizes human community from the bottom up.***

God placed me here on purpose. I am not in this body by accident, and I am not here to be overlooked...

3.The Scandal: No Hierarchy

1 Corinthians 12:22-27 (ESV) - *The parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor... God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

atimoteros - **less honorable** - in the judgment of human observers; what the congregation has decided to overlook

perissoteros - **more abundant, greater** - what God bestows on precisely what human estimation has dismissed

- Paul says God's response to what human beings consider less honorable is to clothe it with greater honor.
- This is not a motivational principle. It is a description of how God operates throughout all of Scripture.
- The stone the builders rejected becomes the cornerstone.
- The youngest son receives the blessing.
- The fishermen are sent while the rabbis stay home.

The gifts the congregation applauds are the ones Paul says need no additional honor. The gifts nobody notices are the ones Paul calls indispensable.

- The gifts that receive the most recognition in a typical service: *Preaching, worship, prophecy, tongues*
- The gifts Paul describes as indispensable and clothed with greater honor: *Helps, administration, service* - ***the gifts that make everything else possible***

The person who sets up chairs before the service is exercising a gift the apostle called indispensable. Stop treating what God has honored as though it requires your permission or another person's permission to matter.

- Verse 26 is not a metaphor. When you break a foot, your entire body is affected.
- Sleep changes. Posture changes. Every other function is altered by the suffering of one member.
- **The church that allows one member to suffer without the rest of the body responding has ceased to function as a body.**

Verse 27 closes with a sentence whose grammar carries more weight than most translations can hold.

- The Greek reads: *Humeis de este soma Christou*. Literally: **"You are body of Christ." No definite article. Paul does not say "the body" or "a body." He removes the**

article entirely, making the identification total and unqualified.

The church is the continuation of the incarnation. When the body gathers, Christ is not watching from a distance. He is present in the body that bears His name.

You are not a member of an institution. You are a member of a body.

Athanasius - On the Incarnation, c. 318 A.D. - *The Spirit continues the incarnation in the body of the church, so that what Christ accomplished in one body of flesh He continues to accomplish in the body of His people gathered in His name. To wound the church is to wound the One whose body it is.*

A church that has learned to get along without the supernatural gifts of the Spirit has not matured beyond the need for them. It has simply settled for less than God intended. A disabled body is not a sign of spiritual sophistication. It is a sign of spiritual loss.

I am not a spectator in the body of Christ. I am a member. The body needs what I carry, and I need what the body carries.

Conclusion - After Columbia, NASA went back to the design. Engineers examined every tile on every remaining shuttle with one new operating principle: **Every part, no matter how small it appears, is significant to the mission.** The most overlooked

component had proven to be the one the whole machine could not survive without.

God placed you in this body as a necessity, not a courtesy. The body needs what only you carry.

In the body of Christ there are no unnecessary parts. No unimportant members. No contributions too small to matter to the whole. The spirit distributed to you as he determined - and what he determined was that this body needs what he put in you.

- To every member who concluded their gift is insufficient - the foot does not become a hand by insisting it is useless. You are exactly where God placed you. **Receive your assignment.**
- To every member who rendered someone else unnecessary - **you need what you have been dismissing.** Repent of the hierarchy you built in a place where God built a body.
- To the whole body - what one member suffers, all suffer. **Stop functioning as a collection of individuals and start functioning as what you are: the body of Christ, locally and presently.**

To everyone - the Spirit who distributes as He determines has determined you belong here. Show up for the person He intends to reach through you.