

Spiritual Gifts - Part 2

1 Corinthians 12:12–31 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION:

FIRST ADAM - When God created the Heaven's and and Earth, day after day the sun would set under the joyful gaze of the Creator as He admired his handywork and in the Hebrew it says, "Elohim Ra'ha Tobe", "God Beheld Good"

When the first week was complete we read...

- "Elohim Ra'ha Mehode Tobe" - "God Beheld Very Good"... notice he meditates on this.. he doesn't speak it.

But then after Adam began to administer this new world, Adam found no companion... and

- God thought and said..."Low Tobe" - "Not Good"

Consider, Adam had no sin nature, he was in perfect fellowship with his Creator.. nevertheless, something was missing. And that missing element could no be filled by anything in all of creation except for other people.

If Adam in his SINLESS state needed communion with others... how much more do you and I?

SECOND ADAM - Then consider the Second Adam, Jesus Christ. Imagine him there as he has just sang a hymn at the conclusion of the last supper... He and his followers have made their way to a garden called Gethsemane.

It would be there that the covenant would be initiated... The courtroom proceedings would begin where ultimately the guilt of us all would be placed on our Savior. As Jesus stepped into that dark garden, He invited three friends, Peter, James and John to go with him through this greatest of all trials.

If the Second Adam in his SAVING state needed communion with others... how much more do you and I?

God has designed each one of us to be wonderfully **DEFICIENT** and **DEPENDENT** on on other. Every single member of the body vitally important, but absolutely none sufficient in and of themselves.

CONTEXT: This was a truth the Corinthian Church had difficulty embracing. They had begun to believe that some members who had certain gifts were somehow superior to other members with other gifts. In fact, this was so extreme that the super gifted wondered if they lesser gifted were necessary at all.

ILLUSTRATION: I call this tendency - Sully Syndrome. Remember, Monster's University? The Monster world ran off of screams and no one could make a kid scream better than James P Sullivan. Sully was a natural born scarer... he wasn't even sure why Mike Wazowski bothered to enroll in Monster U.

Well I've seen Christians like that. They view the whole church through the one thing they are gifted at.

Those with the gifts of...

- LEADERSHIP - look down on those with the gift of service because they don't have the capacity to organize and administer.
- SERVICE - look down on those who with the gift of giving because they just want to pay for everything to get done.
- MERCY - look down on those with the gift of prophecy because they want to address sin issues that caused the need for mercy in the first place.

What you end up with is an entire church thinking, "this world and this church would be a far better place if everyone was just like me....because frankly... I'm just a little bit better than everyone else". ***The Sully Syndrome*** or it could be called, ***the Satan Syndrome***. Because that way of thinking was really what turned the angel Lucifer into the demon Satan.

Two extremes Paul is battling against in the text: *Superiorly Complex and an Inferiority Complex.*

- *He is correcting those who think the church would be much better if I ran things.*
- *He is also correcting those who think, I'm not really sure I have anything to offer the Church.*

To combat these extremes he offers three PRINCIPLES: The Principle of Diversity, Dependence, and Distribution... Let's look at each one.

1. The Principle of Diversity

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

So Paul begins by pointing out the external diversity of the church...

a. The Church is Ethnically Diverse

13b. Jews or Greeks

At the Church at Corinth you had men and women who were ***ethnically Jews***. The men were circumcised, they all grew up reading the law and the prophets. They were

familiar with the psalms of David. They had similar physical features, they had similar accents.

Then there were those who were **ethnically Greeks**, Corinthian Natives. They were not circumcised, they grew up reading the philosophers Plato and Aristotle, they enjoyed different sporting events than the Jews did.

But Paul says, “we were all baptized (immersed) into one body”

Not only were they ethnically diverse...

b. The Church is Economically Diverse

13c. slaves or free

In this time there was a system of slavery. It was not the chattel slavery we are familiar with in pre-civil war America. It was a form of indentured servitude. If a person had debts they could not repay, they became slaves of the Master until they won their freedom.

So you had members who were slaves and members who were free.

In the early church there were occasions when SLAVES became the Pastors of the church and had a measure of spiritual authority over their christian MASTERS.

But Paul begins by just pointing out... that all of those external, worldly, standards made no difference before the cross. At the cross the ground is level.

The Master had no advantage over the Slave.
The Jew had no advantage over the Greek.

They all came to Jesus the same way.

Not only the principle of Diversity...

2. The Principle of Dependence

Paul introduces the metaphor of a physical body in verse 14 -

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

a. The Church Body has no Disposable Members (or I could say, “inferior” members)

¹⁵ If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.

ILLUSTRATION: The foot is something you just don't think about very much, until it hurts. I remember several years ago, I had something akin to gout in my big toe. I've never been in so much physical pain in my life. Julie had to take me to the emergency room. I sat there for waiting on the Doctor for at least three or four weeks. When he came in, the first thing he did was grab my toe and squeeze and said, "does it hurt?" I said, "It does and if you touch it again, I am going to kick you through that door".

ILLUSTRATION: I remember back in the 90's Dione Sanders - PRIMETIME, was diagnosed with TURF TOE. Suddenly, this amazing athlete was benched because of his toe. March of this year, because of complications related to that old energy...he spent 23 days in the hospital and lost 40lbs. He had to have someone help him bathe and relieve himself all related to a toe injury.

¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

Ears are strange members of the body. They are just big flaps of skin and Cartledge. We decorate them with ear rings to try and help them out.

But, even I could stand a fighting chance against **Floyd Mayweather**...provided he has a good case **vertigo**.

There are no insignificant members of the body of Christ...we need each other.

b. The Church has no Independent Members (or I could say, "superior" members)

¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

ILLUSTRATION: Every week people encourage me to keep doing what I'm doing and I appreciate it. But there are nursery workers on the other side of the hall that you never see. As a matter of fact, for safety we can't let you walk down that hall. So week after week they rock babies, change diapers, they make sure that the kids feel safe, have fun and learn about Jesus.

Can you imagine how different the church experience would be if they boycotted? It doesn't matter how good a preacher is, if you put enough 2 year olds in the sanctuary... no one pays attention.

As a matter of fact, let's hear it for the nursery workers!

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, ***the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.***

ILLUSTRATION: I read a story this week about a Maestro who played one of these big massive organs in an ancient cathedral. Those old pipe organs had no automated power. Little boys were placed down in a chamber and their job was to pump the bellows so that the Maestro would have pressure to push the air through the pipes.

Well it was time for a concert... the Maestro took his place, the boy took his place, the boy spoke to the Maestro when it was time to begin and said, "Sir are WE ready?" The Maestro spoke to the boy... little boy... I am the Master, you are a child. It is not important that WE be ready... it is important that I be ready.

Then he hit the first chord, no sound came out... he looked at the boy again and the boy said, "Are WE ready now?"

²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

Any good leader knows that after a victory, he must turn the spotlight on those who worked behind the scenes.

Coach Bear Bryant said, *"If we lose it's my fault, if we win it will always be your fault"*.

If you are in a position of leadership - constantly show honor to those who support you.

²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

ILLUSTRATION: Have you ever met a person who received a cancer diagnosis? They don't typically say, "My lungs have cancer", but rather, "I have cancer".

When one member suffers... the whole body suffers.

Our church is relatively large. The first church in Jerusalem was three times larger than we are. When a church grows it is to be expected that we aren't all going to know one another. That is why groups are so important. We have to organize into groups so that people who know you, know when you are suffering.

So that means, you have to take some time to get into a group. It also means you have to risk a measure of transparency and let people get to know you.

Groups are like churches, some are inward focused, some outward. If you go to one and don't feel like a good fit, visit around. I promise you have a place here.

The principle of Diversity...

The principle of Dependence...

3. The Principle of Distribution

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

²⁸ And God has appointed in the church **first** apostles, **second** prophets, **third** teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ **But earnestly desire the higher gifts.**

A couple of things I want to point out -

NUMBER - I emphasized the numbering because I want you to see that it seems like Paul is contradicting everything he has just taught.

He's not - he is pointing out that there is a logical reason why God distributes gifts as He does.

The ministry of the Apostles and Prophets had to come first, or what would the teachers teach?

Keep in mind, the church at Corinth really exalted **tongues**... for whatever reason it seemed really spectacular. But without the gift of **interpretation**, the gift of tongues were not to be exercised in corporate worship.

And without the scriptures we would have no way to discern the validity of what was spoken in a tongue. You see?

UNIFORMITY - Also, notice that he raises a rhetorical question - "do all speak in tongues?" The implied answer is, "No". Some of you grew up in a setting that insisted that tongues is the only sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit. That is in complete contradiction with what Paul says here.

INVITATION/CONCLUSION:

I asked my wife, "Who was the most positive influence in your life as a child other than your family?" She said, "Mrs Pam Whitten". Pam taught GA's (Girls in Action) at Sunny Home Baptist Church. Not the Preacher, not the Worship Leader.... Mrs. Pam, the GA leader.

You know what I believe... in 20 years someone will ask some of the children of this church... "Who was the most positive influence in your life as a child other than your family?" I won't even make the top 10. But you know who will?

Some of those nursery workers.... A faithful Sunday school teacher... and maybe, just maybe, it could be you.

You are important, you are valuable.

EVERYBODY IS SOMEBODY IN HIS BODY