

## Redeemed Sinners Devoted to *God's People*

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

### Intro

[*Redeemed Sinners Devoted to God's Word, God's People, and God's Mission...All for God's Glory.* Today, look inward. Next week, outward.]

I want our hearts to be captivated by the beauty of belonging to the church, so that we give our lives to the church. *Just like you are to prioritize your own immediate family over other families or even extended family*, members of the same local church must pursue one another to help each other follow Jesus.

That's what church membership is. It says, "I belong to these people, and they belong to me!" In this passage, Paul pictures the beauty of church membership by speaking of it in terms of a body. **[v12]** "ONE body, many members." "All the members of the body, though many, are one body." That's the main point of this passage.

The whole passage (vv12-26) is essentially an illustration of **[v11]**.

“These” refers to the various gifts that members exercise in the church. The problem was, in Corinth, some people were getting arrogant about their ability to exercise certain gifts, like prophecy and tongues, and such arrogance was causing division in the church.

Paul is saying, “Why are you arrogant? Your gift comes from the same source as their gift—the Holy Spirit. We all have the Holy Spirit and HE decides what gifts to give to whom. So you have no right to be arrogant.”

Look how he puts it in [v13]. *Baptism of the Spirit* refers to what happens to every Christian the moment they got saved—the Holy Spirit overtakes them, makes them his own, and incorporates them into the body of Christ.

Paul says, “It doesn’t matter what ethnicity you are (Jew or Greek), what status you have (slave or free)...every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ was made to drink of on Spirit—he indwells all of us and HE assigns gifts. Pride is obliterated when we realize the Spirit is sovereign over our gifts in the church.

The primary emphasis of this passage is NOT MAINLY: “I gotta figure out my spiritual gift and use it as I see fit!” Too many have go to this passage as justification for *insisting* on using a particular gift in the church. That flips this passage on its head.

*I remember talking to a lady about her role in her church many years ago who insisted, “I must serve in the Children's Ministry. It's my gift.” Now, that was questionable, but I think she missed the whole point.*

The focus of this passage is on the beauty of the *unity* of the church *seen* in the various gifts people bring to the church. Your mindset must be: “I'm here to build up the church!” NOT “I demand that my gifts be used.”

There is one body with many parts to highlight the unity of the whole. *One church with many members with various roles shows forth the beauty of our oneness.* That's the point. And Paul unfolds that argument in three parts...

**1) The church needs you. [vv14-16]** Do you hear the language of “belonging”? Some say that because they are not a CERTAIN PART of the body, therefore, “I do not *belong* to the body.” That same word is used in the second half of the sentence when he says, “that would not make it any less *part* of the body.”

So these verses address the kind of person who is so aware of his deficiencies that he believes he has nothing to offer to the church. “Those people have it all together! They don’t need me!” And in a rather humorous way, Paul makes the clear point: “The church needs you.”

It’s a funny picture. Different parts of the human body start talking. The foot goes first, “I’m not that important. I can’t grab stuff like the hand can. I’ve tried painting before and it’s a mess. Plus, I stink. The hand get soap baths multiple times a day. I don’t belong to the body because I’m not useful like the hand.”

And then, the ear starts talking, “I look kind of funny. I bulge out of the head. But Mr. Eye is colorful, and everybody looks right at him...

Nobody looks at me. I don't think I belong to the body because I'm not the eye."

That's how some church members sound when they start comparing themselves and throwing a pity party. It sounds ridiculous. Because Paul's point is, "Just because you don't feel you belong, doesn't mean you don't belong. How you feel doesn't make you any less part of the body. If you're a church member, you're part of the church, regardless of how you feel about your role in the church."

I appreciate Paul's humor. It's intended to make us chuckle so that the point lands: "The church needs you! Stop comparing! Stop throwing a pity-party and give yourself to the church!"

God knows your sins and shortcomings...

- "But I'm not very outgoing!" The church needs introverts. Too many extraverts might overwhelm and scare off introverts!
- "But I'm not married." Neither were Paul or Jesus! You can give to the life to the church in ways that married folks cannot.

- “But I don’t have any kids.” Use that extra time to build meaningful relationships.
- “But I have too many kids!” Don’t minimize the impact you have in the example you can provide on how to raise kids.
- “But I’m old and I can’t keep up with all this young energy.” The church needs spiritual mothers and fathers.

*I told an older couple in our church recently how vital they are because of how they function like a spiritual mother and father to so many. It reminds me of one couple who go to a mostly young small group, and oh how that group loves them! They’re like mom and dad.*

The church needs you. Just because you’re not an eye or a hand or a pastor or married or young or whatever...doesn’t mean you’re not needed.

## **2) You need the church. [v17]**

So, using the body metaphor, he draws out the negative implications of missing parts of the body. We’d just be a big eye and wouldn’t hear anything. We’d be a gigantic ear and couldn’t smell anything.

Just as God designed the human body to function as a unified whole, so too, he designed the church the same way. **[v18]** This is God's idea! One body, many parts working together. **[vv19-20]** Those verses serve a death blow to solo Christianity. One person is not sufficient to be or do what *only* the whole church can be and do. Solo-Christianity is an attempt to be the whole body in one member! Impossible.

*I remember going to the movies with my wife many years ago, and we struck up a conversation with a guy who said he was a Christian and was very zealous. But when I asked him what church he was part of, he said, "Oh, I've done away with organized religion years ago. It slows me down." He was an eye trying to smell and hear. It doesn't work!*

So many Christians have this utterly unbiblical mindset! You need the church!

Now, I want you to see how this passage guards against two extremes when it comes to church involvement? Not only does the church need you, but YOU need the CHURCH.

*On one end*, if ALL you emphasize in your heart is: “The church needs ME!”, what’s gonna happen? You’re gonna think you’re God’s gift to the church and you’ll *insist* on serving in ways YOU demand. Church involvement becomes all about you!

And when you don’t serve in ways you think you should, you’ll say, “Well, they just don’t see the value I bring.” And you throw a pity party because your heart is consumed with the *imbalanced* idea that the church needs you.

BUT, on the other extreme, if all you emphasize in our heart is: “I need the church,” then what’s gonna happen? You’ll suck the life out of people. You’ll be desperate and needy and taking from others, rather than giving to them. You won’t serve. You won’t minister TO others. You’ll only BE ministered to BY others.

So the first part of the passage speaks to those who think they have nothing to offer to the church, and the second part speaks to those who think they don’t need the church. Look how Paul explicitly condemns that mindset. **[v21]**

You can't say that to the church, "I don't need you." This is why, when people say, "I don't have to go to church to be a Christian," it makes me wonder what they mean by "Christian."

Of course, going to church doesn't make us a Christian, *any more than going home makes you married, either. But I would question whether you truly understand the point marriage if you never go home.* You can't say that to the church, "I don't need you." **[Appeal to attendees to join our church or another faithful church.]**

God did not design the Christian life apart from the church because you need the church, the church needs you...Why?

### **3) Every Member has Value in the Church**

Notice the contrast to the solo-Christian mindset. **[v22-24a]** He introduces the imagery of clothing by comparing those members whom might we deem less important WITH those parts of the human body we purposefully cover up.

*The word we've used with our kids is "privacy." We didn't talk about "privacy" as icky or gross,*

*but as precious and valued, and that's why it needs to be covered up. We never wanted to give our kids the unbiblical picture that their bodies, created by God, are gross. They're not. They're beautiful, but they need to be used according to God's good design.*

That's the very point Paul makes: We HONOR those private parts of the body when we treat them modestly. So the analogy is, "Those members of the church whom we might deem less significant, are NOT, because they require greater attention." The fact that they are given more care reveals how significant they are.

Do you know how this might apply to us? Our Special Member Care Team, led by Monica Moore, is so important. It's because of this verse! Our Benevolence Ministry led by Caleb Robertson is so important! If you want an easy way to get plugged in to minister to people who need a little more care, talk to them.

*I was overjoyed on Friday when one of our younger members made himself willing to pick up an older member at a Senior Care facility at*

*5pm when it closed, spend a couple hours with him until 7pm when our Men's Fellowship started, and then drove him to the Men's Fellowship and back home.*

That's what we're talking about here! But what's the point of it? **[v24b-25]** See the purpose clause in v25? "IN OTHER THAT there may be no division in the body." This is a unity issue! When we treat other members, especially those who need more attention, as "less than," it divides the body.

*You will not say, "My left pinky toe isn't that important," after you bang it on the corner of a brick wall! That'll put a grown man on the floor. And how ironic it is that when such a seemingly insignificant member of your body is damaged, it puts your whole body on the floor!...While you hold on to that little toe.*

This is why Paul says in **[v26]**. Indifference is NOT an option in the church. When one member suffers or rejoices, the rest of the church—if we're functioning properly, like a body—feels it too.

## **Implications**

Now for our purposes in this series, let me provide two implications of this body metaphor for the church. What does this emphasis on devotion to God's people imply about how we function as a church?

***1) We are a highly relational, low program church.*** In other words, church involvement, biblically speaking, is not mainly about doing a bunch of stuff...going to a bunch of events. It's about being in each other's lives. It's about being part of a people, not a program.

So I would ask you: Who do you know? Who are you letting into your life? Who are you serving? Who are you reaching out to? Who are you having over for dinner? Who are you grabbing coffee with just hear their story and ask how you can pray for them? Whose burdens are you bearing? Who are you rejoicing with?

If you wanna be involved in the church, the first thing you should do is grab a church directory, start praying through it, and circling faces of people you can intentionally get to know.

Then be intentional over time in figuring out what it looks like to love them. To be a church devoted to God's people means we are highly relational, and low program.

**2) *Everything we do, especially in our worship gathering, has a corporate flavor.*** If the church is a body with various parts that highlight the beauty of the unity of the whole, then every aspect of our church life should highlight that corporate identity. Let's use the worship gathering as an example.

***Take the music.*** There's a reason the NT tells us to *sing TO one another*. What does that even mean? Aren't we were supposed to sing to the Lord? Are we worshipping each other? Of course not! To sing to one another means that we, through our singing, are telling the truth of God's Word to each other.

When YOU sing, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace...", you're not singing that *mainly* to yourself.

Who are you telling to turn your eyes to Jesus?  
Those around you! You're telling that to the...

- Mom who is discouraged by the ways she fell short this week.
- Businessman who admitted he finds too much security in his job.
- Teenager who feels dull when he reads the Bible.
- The college student who is so discouraged because he fell again into a sin struggle this week after going so long without.
- Church member who's tempted to walk away from Christ because the world seem more appealing.

When we sing, there is a corporate flavor, not only because we hear each other's voices...

Which we should! The music must NOT overpower the voices! I realize we live in the music capitol of the world, and it is so tempting to think, "If we're gonna reach people, we gotta have really good music!" Instead, we're intentional trying not to have an amazing concert on Sundays because the focus is corporate. There are some things not worth contextualizing. This is one of them!

There's a corporate flavor when we sing, not only because we hear each other's voices, but because we are literally singing TO one another.

So don't get weirded out if you see me looking at you when we sing! *I was at a conference this week with beautiful corporate singing, and I'm looking around and catch Samuel Clintoc's eye, and we just smile and point at each other!*

**Reading Scripture** on Sundays has a corporate flavor because we're all looking at the same passage together. We have different members rotate through reading.

**The Lord's Supper** has a corporate flavor. We all come of front to one table, greeting each other, fellowshipping with one another, and then we all wait to partake together.

Even **preaching** has a corporate flavor. *I told our small group on Wednesday how corporate the preaching event is. Think of how different it is to listen to the sermon at home on headphones!* There's something distinctly corporate about listening to preaching WITH God's people.

When you hear a word about suffering, and you look over at that church member who lost her husband not too long ago, it has an effect on you that listening through earbuds can't.

## **Conclusion**

The church is a *body* of believers. Now, why does Paul use THAT metaphor? Is he saying: "Church life is just like a human body. You got hands and eyes and feet...and they all work together. I'm just using that metaphor because it works." Is that Paul's point?

He's NOT making a connection between the church and the human body *in general*. He's making a connection between the church and specific body! Whose body? **[v27]** "You (plural). You collectively/ corporately/ as a whole....ARE the body of Christ."

One of the reason God the Son took on a human body was so that you would have an idea of how the church is supposed to function. Jesus sacrificed his whole body for the whole church so that the whole church would give themselves to his body, the church. **[Gospel]**

He gave up his life for every member so that every member together could function like his body, sacrificing themselves for one another, serving one another, give themselves to one another.

Kinney is the body of Jesus Christ himself. And every member is PART of THAT body. What does that mean? The church is so connected to Jesus that we are the outworking of his very self... which means, when the church is properly functioning, we are acting like Christ. The church represents the very body of Jesus here on earth.

So, let us be devoted to this body. Let us be devoted to God's people.