

A Lesson In Spiritual Anatomy From God

1 Cor. 12:12-31

Intro. The Bible uses a number of analogies to provide a picture of the relationship between Christ and His Church. We are His building (1 Cor. 3:9-15). We are His field (1 Cor. 3:9). We are his temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17). We are his bride (Eph 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7-8; 21:9-10). And, here, in 1 Cor. 12:12-27, we are his body.

Paul make a clear connection between the church as the body of Christ and spiritual gifts. It allows him to emphasize both the one and the many, unity and diversity. There is one body with many parts. There is unity (one body) with diversity (many gifts). Now, before we walk through this chapter, it is important that we note a clear distinction in the Bible between the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) and the filling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Unfortunately, a great deal of confusion has swirled around these two biblical truths because people have allowed their experience to trump the plain and clear teachings of Scripture. So, what does the Bible teach? The following provides the Bibles teaching in chart form:

CONTRASTING THE BAPTISM
AND
THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

BAPTISM (Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:13)	FILLING (Eph. 5:18; cf. Col. 3:16)
1) One time experience never to be repeated.	1) Repeated and should be continuously experienced.
2) Happened in the <u>past</u> at Salvation	2) Happens in the <u>present</u> for ongoing Sanctification
3) Brings <u>union</u> with Christ. Brings us into relationship with Christ.	3) Brings <u>communion</u> with Christ. Brings fellowship with Christ.
4) Introduce us <u>into</u> the body of Christ.	4) Empowers individual members <u>in</u> the body of Christ.
5) Never commanded of us.	5) Continually commanded.
6) A <u>positional</u> act brought about by God at salvation/conversion.	6) An <u>experiential</u> act brought about by our submission and obedience to God's will and Word.
7) <u>All</u> Christians have had this experience.	7) <u>All</u> Christians should have this ongoing experience, but unfortunately many do not.

We are united with Christ and baptized into His body (the Church) by Christ the moment we are saved. As Schreiner writes, “Jesus Christ is the baptizer and the Spirit is the person one is plunged at baptism...Jesus is the baptizer and he baptizes with or in the Holy Spirit (*1 Cor.*, TNTC, 263). Now we are ready to sit at the feet of God and learn His lesson in spiritual anatomy.

I. The body of Christ is characterized by unity

12:12-13

The Holy Spirit distributes various spiritual gifts “as he wills” (v. 11). Does this variety of gifts fracture the church into warring factions and contest over who is

the most valuable? Well, it shouldn't! And yet, this is exactly what was happening at Corinth, so Paul moves to correct both their faulty theology and practice.

1) We are one as the body of the Savior 12:12

The words “body” and “one” are united in v. 12. Both appear repeatedly in our text. Yes, there are many members in the church, but only one body. We are the one body of Christ in the Spirit. As noted, Paul uses the analogy of a body beginning in verse 12 to illustrate that just as the different parts of a body are joined together to work together, so is the body of Christ. *“For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ.”* (12:12) The emphasis is not on the word “many,” but on the word “one.” That is why verse 13 naturally follows. *“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink.”* (12:13)

Paul first describes the unity of the body. We are many members, but we are one body. Now unity is not to be confused with *union*. You can be in union, but not in unity. You can take a dog and a cat, tie their tails together and throw them over an old fashion clothesline. You may have union, but you won't have unity. Unity also is not *uniformity*. It does not mean that we look

exactly alike or have to agree on everything. It does not mean that everyone else has to be a copy or a clone of anyone else. When it comes to a symphony, you must have three sections — wind, string and percussion or else you don't have an orchestra. It does not mean that everyone plays the same instrument. It means they play the same song in the same key in harmony with one another. The point is the same Holy Spirit that gives us different gifts binds those gifts together in the body of Christ, and unity is the result.

2) We are one by the baptism of the Spirit 12:12-13

There is one body of Christ. There is also “one Spirit we were all baptized (immersed, dunked) [by Christ] into one body” (v.13). I love what comes next: “Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — all were made to drink of one Spirit. No distinctions! No discrimination! As Paul says in Gal. 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” I love the way an old hymn puts it:

“The ground is level at the foot of the cross. Anyone may come there for there is no cost. Rich man or poor man, [slave] or free. The ground was leveled that day at Calvary.”

At conversion, the Lord Jesus baptized you in the Spirit into His body. We are one by this baptism. Every single one of use.

II. The body of Christ is characterized by diversity 12:14-26

God is not only a God of unity, he is also a God of diversity. No one snowflake is like another snowflake. There is a wide spectrum of colors in a rainbow. The world is made up of different ethnicities. This is true in the church too!

1) We are different from one another 12:14-20

The body of Christ is diverse as well. “Indeed, the body is not one part but many” (12:14). We are made by God to be different from one another. There is nothing wrong with being different. There is something wrong with being divided. No person should be jealous of another person’s spiritual gifts or God-given abilities. In fact, if we truly and rightly understand the whole dynamic of spiritual gifts, we celebrate the differences and the truth that we are all unique. It is for our blessing and benefit. It takes every part of the body working together to have a healthy body that will function properly. One part of the body needs a different part of the body to do its work.

“Indeed, the body is not one part but many. If the foot should say, “Because I’m not a hand, I don’t belong to the body,” it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I’m not an eye, I don’t belong to the body,” it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. If the

whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?” (12:14-17)

When you drive a car you need your eyes to guide the car, your hands to steer the car, and your feet to propel the car. Your eyes, hands, and feet are not competing with each other; they are completing each other. Every part is needed, because each part is dependent on the other. The thing to keep in mind is that even though we are different members of the body; we are still members of the same body. *“But as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted. And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body (vv. 18-20).*

We are different from one another. God made us this way exactly as He wanted.

2) We are dependent on one another 12:21-25

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” Or again, the head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that are weaker are indispensable. And those parts of the body that we consider less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unrespectable parts are treated with greater respect” (12:21-23). The eye can do things the foot cannot do and the foot can do things the eye cannot do, but both need each other. They are dependent on each other. There is no such

thing as “Long Ranger Christianity.” *There is no such thing as a Christian who does not need to be involved in a local church.* Each person needs others. Each part of the body needs the rest of the body.

You may be a foot in the body of Christ, but if you injure a foot you cripple the body. You may be an eye in the body of Christ, but if you are missing your eyes you will blind the body. As the body needs every part working together, so does the body of Christ. Everybody is needed.

This passage teaches us that every member of the body is needed. We all have different gifts, different passions, and different interests. Every gift should be unwrapped and put into the service of the body. *Everybody is somebody in His body.* Everybody is essential in Christ’s body.

Paul’s argument takes an interesting and important turn in vv. 22-26. “*On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable, we clothe these (bestow) with greater honor, and our unrespectable (unpresentable) parts are treated with greater respect (modesty), which our respectable (most presentable) parts do not need (require). Instead, God has (so composed) put the body together, giving greater honor to the less honorable, so that there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same concern for each other. So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with*

it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” (12:23-26).

That is exactly the way a human body functions. If I have a splinter in my right hand my mouth says, “Ouch!” My brain tells my left hand to remove the splinter. Then, my body is happy again. And, parts of the body we clothe out of modesty are also critically important to our bodies, especially if they are not working well! Yes, they are given less prominence, until they are not working properly! Oftentimes, the church forgets that when one member hurts the body should hurt because the many members are one body. We are to be one in sorrow. We are to be one in rejoicing. We are to be one in remorse and we are to be one in gladness for we are all one body.

III. The body of Christ is characterized by mutuality 12:27-31

Paul concludes this chapter with these words in verses 27-31: *“Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it. And God has appointed these in the church; first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, next miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, leading, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all do miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But desire the greater (ESV, “higher”) gifts. And I will show you an even better (ESV, “more excellent”) way.” (12:27-31)* Once more we note that when you look at the list of spiritual gifts, none of them are all inclusive. Here Paul mentions some

additional gifts (adding to 12:8-10), namely apostles, prophets, teachers, “helping” and “administrating.” He did not mention any of these in verses 8-10. Furthermore, he reminds us that not only is the church given spiritual gifts, it is also given spiritually gifted people – apostles, prophets, and teachers (Schreiner, *TNTC*, 268). There may be a distinction between office and gift that we should consider. Paul specifically numbers in order of importance apostles, prophets and teachers (vv. 28), which is in the same order given in Ephesians 4:11. Notice tongues is placed last. These gifts are placed first because they are considered of greater importance. (Mare & Harris, *TEBC*, 94); (Bruce, *NTCB*, 122). Now, these gifts are still in effect today in some sense. Every Christian has the apostolic ministry of bearing witness to their belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus. God still calls preachers and prophets who are to be a prophetic witness of the truth of God’s word to believers and unbelievers. There is always going to be the need for teachers who provide clarity and articulation to the basic fundamental truths of the Christian faith. Before we walk quickly thru these verses (also vv. 8-10 again) it is helpful to see where the gifts are listed and how we might categorize them.

Romans 12:6-8	1 Corinthians 12:8-10	1 Corinthians 12:28-30	Ephesians 4:11	1 Peter 4:10-11
Prophecy	Word of Wisdom	Apostleship	Apostleship	Speaking
Serving	Word of Knowledge	Prophecy	Prophet	Serving
Teaching	Faith	Teaching	Evangelist	

Exhortation	Healings	Miracles	Pastor/Teacher	
Giving	Miracles	Healing		
Leading	Prophecy	Helps		
Showing Mercy	Discerning of Spirits	Administration		
	Tongues	Tongues		
	Interpretation of Tongues			

Speaking Gifts (involves communication of biblical truth)	Serving Gifts (ability to demonstrate Christian love in practical ways)	Sign Gifts (spiritual manifestations which attest to God's New Covenant)
Evangelism	Service	Tongues
Pastor/Teacher	Giving	Interpretation of Tongues
Teaching	Leading	Healing
Wisdom	Mercy	Miracles
Knowledge	Faith	
Prophecy	Helps	
Exhortation	Administration	
Discernment	Marriage 1 Cor. 7	
	Singleness 1 Cor. 7	

Paul once more reminds us that we “are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (v. 27). He then delineates his 2nd overlapping list of spiritual gifts in this chapter. Combining both lists, they are as follows:

1) **Wisdom** 12:8

“For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance (message) of wisdom.”

This is a gift through which God supernaturally imparts insight into the

Scriptures in certain situations so that the Word of God may be applied, the

will of God may be preserved, and the work of God may be continued (Merritt). Carson points out that the emphasis is not exactly on the wisdom, but on the messages, the *lógos*, which literally means “word.” (Carson, *Showing*, 38). To properly understand this gift we must first define what we mean by wisdom. Wisdom is not just knowing the ways of the world. It is not just being a clever person, nor it is just common sense.

Wisdom is not just education. You can get a Ph.D. but if you don’t believe in God, the Bible calls you a “fool.” (Ps. 14:1). Some of the wisest people you will ever meet do not have very much education. Wisdom is supernatural in origin. (James 1:5). You can get certain kinds of knowledge from a book and education in a school. True wisdom only comes from God. Wisdom is special spiritual insight into the ways of God and the Word of God that gives one the ability to see a situation from his point of view. It is the ability to see things through the eyes of God as he see them, and then respond as God would.

2) **Knowledge** **12:8**

There is some debate among students of the Bible whether there is a distinction made between wisdom and knowledge. F.F. Bruce sums it up best when he says, “Paul presumably intends some distinction between *sophia* (wisdom) and *gnósis* (knowledge), but the distinction is not clear to us...(Bruce, *NCBC*, 119).

It should be noted that this is the gift of the message or utterance of knowledge, not knowledge itself. No one knows everything. Neither is this necessarily the kind of knowledge that comes from a book. You don't study to achieve and receive this kind of knowledge.

A word of knowledge is perhaps when God reveals something to someone that they would not know or could not know about a particular situation unless it was revealed. It is a special message of insight into a particular situation that may reveal a hidden motive or a future action.

Two such examples might be found in Acts. In chapter 5 Peter uncovered the fact that Ananias had kept back some of the money he claimed to have given to the church and in Acts 27 the Apostle Paul warned the entire ship they had to stay together or else they would all perish. How would either one of these men have known and shared those things apart from the word of knowledge? Regardless, both of these gifts (wisdom and knowledge) reflect the God-given ability to bring spiritual insight to bear in a situation beyond human understanding. Blomberg notes, "If Paul intends any differences between the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge it may be that wisdom is knowledge applied, particularly in moral context..." (Blomberg, *TNAC*, 244). Schreiner, on the other hand, believes wisdom and knowledge "are best understood as referring to the gift of teaching (*1 Cor.*, 257).

3) **The Work of Faith** **12:9**

“...to another faith by the same Spirit...” (12:9). This is not referring to “saving faith” because that is a gift that is necessary for all Christians to be saved (cf. Eph. 2:8). Hayes is certainly correct when he says, “...presumably ‘faith’ here refers not to ordinary Christian faith in God, but to the sort of special faith that can ‘move mountains’...” (Hays, *Interpretation*, 212).

Bailey notes that “faith in the New Testament is composed of intellectual assent, a response in obedience, and a daily walk of trust...many are gifted in one or more of these three aspects of faith.” (Bailey, *Paul*, 337). Some people who have an extraordinary ability to trust God, have the ability to see what no one else can see. They believe God and His promises in Scripture with a quiet confidence and unshakeable assurance. They believe God is going to come through. It is in effect an unshakeable faith in the unparalleled faithfulness of God.

- **The Sign (Miraculous) Gifts**

There are some who believe that the more spectacular (sign gifts) gifts are no longer in existence today. These persons are known as cessations. That is not my view. I am a continualist, cautious but open to all the gifts being active today. Now, these gifts though active today, are exceptional, just like they are in the Bible. Most of the time they are rarely used except in special situations.

Often they manifest themselves in missionary context as the gospel invades new territory. Healing, miracles and tongues fall under what can be called the sign gifts category.

4) **The Gifts of Healings 12:9, 28**

“...to another gifts of healing by one Spirit...” (12:9). It is important to notice that both the words “gift” and “healing” are plural. This may be so for two reasons. First, there are different kinds of healings. Surely a doctor can be used by God to bring physical healing, a counselor may be use by God to bring about emotional healing, and a pastor may be used to bring about spiritual healing. Bailey writes, “Gifts of healings are given at times to doctors and also to simple people of faith.” (Bailey, *Paul*, 337). The use of the plural points out that there is no one gift of healing. There are “gifts” of “healings.” That is, God, at certain times and in certain situations through certain people, brings healing to those who are sick. Bottomline: All healing is divine healing in whatever way God chooses to give it. Carson points out there may have been certain persons with one of these gifts of healing for certain diseases at certain times. However, no Christian should think of the gift of healing as something he or she has on a permanent basis and begin “a healing ministry.” (Carson, *Showing*, 39-40). Paul had the gift of healing, but he could not heal Trophimus, who he left ill at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20).

In sum, we should believe in faith healing but not faith healers. God still heals. He sometimes uses the doctor to heal, he may use the prayer of faith to heal (Jam. 5:15), or he may use other means to heal. But, is it not always God's will to heal. All of us are headed to a grave if Jesus delays His coming. There is healing in the atonement (Is. 53), but it will be perfectly realized only in eternity.

5) **The Performing of Miracles 12:10, 28**

“...to another, the performing (working) of miracles.” (12:10). Our God is a miracle working God, and we have no biblical reason to say He is not performing miracles today, however He chooses. Bailey notes, “In areas of our world traditionally closed to the Gospel, astounding *miracles* are taking place that cannot be forced into a post-Enlightenment worldview. (Bailey, *Paul*, 337). I agree. God is using dreams to bring Muslims to faith in Christ as he leads them to the Word of God, to the Gospel, and to salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. Again, like in the Bible, miracles are exceptional not normative. But, they are still taking place today.

The word “miracle” is plural. Literally it means “the working of powers.” It is interesting that both healings and miracles are plural. Healings may be a demonstration of miraculous powers, but not all miraculous powers can be limited to healings. (Carson, *Showing*, 40) Indeed, one could argue both

theologically and even practically that the greatest miracle of all is that of regeneration (God making a spiritual dead sinner spiritually alive)! If you have no problems with God you should have no problems with miracles.

Bottomline: Don't ever put God in a box. God will not violate His Word, but He is a God of the impossible (Luke 1:37). He can do anything consistent with His nature and His Word.

6) **The Word of Prophecy 12:10, 28**

“...to another prophecy...” (12:10, 28). The gift of prophecy is mentioned in 12:10 and the office of prophet in 12:28. This one word, this one gift, has generated volumes of debate and discussion as to exactly what should be included in its definition. Carson puts it succinctly when he says, “The answer to that question are legion.” (Carson, *Showing*, 91). There is neither enough time nor space here to categorize and investigate all the various definitions that have been given to this gift, but at a minimum, we would define the major part of this gift this way: *It is the spiritual ability to proclaim God's truth in such an authoritative and powerful fashion that lives are changed, the lost are saved, and believers are motivated for greater service and maturity.* Carson notes there is a sustained tradition that identifies New Testament prophecy with what we today call “preaching” or “expounding scripture.” (Carson, *Showing*, 92). Bailey puts it well when he

says, “*Prophecy* is at least preaching at its best. Many have experienced it to be more; it cannot be less.” (Bailey, *Paul*, 337).

Now in one sense, all of the gifts should have a prophetic function. Every gift should be used in such a way that you hear the voice of God and see the work of God. All true preaching should have a prophetic element. And, this is another of the gifts that requires speech. In 1 Cor 14:3, Paul will write: “*On the other hand, the person who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement and consolation.*” (14:3) And, Blomberg adds a helpful word concerning this gift when he writes: “Both inside and outside of the canon, prophecy consistently included both ‘foretelling’ (predicting future events) and, *more predominantly*, ‘forthtelling’ (exhorting God’s people...about his will for their present circumstances).” (Blomberg, *TNAC*, 244, emphasis added). Concerning this gift Schreiner simply notes, “prophecy is communicating revelation from God in a spontaneous utterance” (1 Cor., 259). By the way, Acts 21:9 tells us Philip the evangelist had 4 “daughters who prophesied.”

7) **The Work of Discerning of Spirits 12:10**

Paul refers to the “...the ability to distinguish between spirits...” (12:10).

This gift may be related to the gift of a wisdom. It takes insight to be able to distinguish between what is true and what is false. (Schreiner, *TNTC*, 258).

“To distinguished” comes from a Greek word that literally means “to see through.” In other words, this gift refers to someone who can see through false teaching, and false prophets, and false doctrine. You might call it having “spiritual x-ray vision.”

Drawing from I John 4:1-3, the gift may also be the ability to discern not just what is being said, but also the person who is saying it. We must be aware that some of the finest most eloquent speakers can also be exceptionally good at deception. More than ever before, this is a gift that is desperately needed both in the church and in the academy.

8) **The Word of Tongues 12:10, 28**

“...to another different kinds of tongues...” (12:10). Of all the gifts, this is probably the most controversial. Unfortunately, the gift of tongues has been a divisive issue in many churches. Too often, the biblical guidelines laid down for this gift in 1 Cor. 14 are not followed. In fact, they are blatantly ignored in most instances. So, what is the gift of tongues? The gift of tongues is the supernatural ability to speak in a foreign language previously unknown, so that the Gospel and biblical truth may be communicated to people that need to hear it. Now, there are some who believe that this is a gift of what might be called “an ecstatic utterance.” However, Schreiner notes there is no evidence in Hellenistic literature that this word *glōssa* ever has the

connotation of an ecstatic utterance. (Schreiner, *TNTC*, 261-262). As Mare and Harris point out, “The only concrete evidence we have as to the nature of the tongue-speaking in the early church is to be found in the only clear scriptural example we have — that given in Acts 2 where the speaking is a speaking in foreign languages that were to be understood and were understood.” (Mare & Harris, *TEBC*, 91)

F.F. Bruce concurs that the word “different” or “various” would include languages intelligible to some hearers, and those which could not be understood by some hearers and would need interpretation. (Bruce, *TNCBC*, 119).

The gift of tongues in particular is a missionary gift. “Different kinds of tongues points to the variety of languages (Schreiner, *I Cor.*, 262). 1 Cor. 14 will provide a detailed discussion of this gift.

9) **The Work of Interpretation of Tongues** **12:10**

This gift obviously would be the spiritual ability to translate a message from one language, previously unknown, into the native language of the one who hears it. Again, this is easily categorized as a missionary gift, specifically for one who is involved with Gospel witness, but does not speak the foreign language in question. God supernaturally gives this gift to spread the gospel where it previously is unknown. It, again, is exceptional and not normative. If

it were normative, missionaries would not have to learn the language of their people group.

10) **Apostleship 12:28**

The word “apostle” has both a technical sense and a general sense. There are Apostles with a capital “A” and apostles with a lower case “a.” The former refers to the 12 (later Paul) who were with Jesus from the baptism of John to his resurrection and ascension (Acts 2:23), the latter to missionaries. The technical use may be in view here (cf Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11). Nevertheless, God calls and gives both for service in spreading the gospel among the nations.

11) **Teaching 12:28**

Teaching is a critical gift for the church’s health (cf Acts 13:1; Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11; Jam. 3:1). Wiersbe points out, “Teachers were needed to help establish believers in the faith” (*Be Wise*, 142). Paul says elders must be “able to teach” (1 Tim 3:2). All elders must be able to teach the Word, but not all teachers are elders. Both men and women may have this gift. Titus 2:1-8 makes this clear. Further, in terms of importance, teacher follows immediately behind the gifts of apostle and prophets (cf 14:1). Leon Morris is helpful here when he writes, “We would not have expected the *teachers* to rank so high. The fact that they do indicates the importance of teaching in the apostolic age. We must bear in mind that the cost of hand-copied books was

high, and few believers could look forward to owning a Bible. The function of a teacher in such a church must have been tremendously important...” (*I Cor.*, TNTC, 175).

12) **Helping** **12:28**

“*For helping*” (12:28) Thiselton helpfully suggests this probably means “kinds of administrative support.” (Thiselton, *TNIGC*, 1019). Helping may correspond to serving in Rom 12:7; same meaning but different words. In every orchestra there is a need for a second fiddle. Of all the gifts, this one may be the most numerous. No church can do all the necessary ministries of the church well without divinely called and gifted worker bees behind the scenes!

13) **Administrating** **12:28**

The word originally referred to the “helmsman of a ship” and refers to people who are especially adept at church ministry and leadership. (cf Rom 12:8 and the gift of leadership). It perfectly complements helping/service. A church needs people to show us where to go. It also needs people to get us there.

Generals and privates: we need both!

Paul brings chapter 12 to a close making several important theological points. First, he has told us all gifts are essential, but some are more valuable and necessary than others (vv. 27-28). Second, no one has all the gifts and no one

gift is for everyone. He does this with a series of 7 rhetorical questions in verses 29-30, all of which expect a “no” answer. Not everyone is an apostle, prophet, teacher, worker of miracles, gifted to supernaturally heal, speak with tongues or interpret tongues. Further, Paul has clearly explained that God is the sovereign gift giver and certain gifts are more important to the health and vibrancy of the church. Therefore, we should earnestly desire the higher (*NASV*, “greater”) gifts (v. 31). And yet, there is something even better and more essential, a “more excellent way,” which Paul will unfold in chapter 13. That thing is love. Once more I appreciate the insights of Leon Morris: “Paul has ranked some of the gifts in order. He has also indicated that even the humble parts of the body are necessary, and that all are set in the body by God. It is not inconsistent with this to suggest that the Corinthians do well if they *eagerly desire the greater gifts*. They cannot obtain them unless God chooses to give them, but presumably their earnest desire and their preparing of themselves is seen as a preliminary to reception, at least in some cases. Yet there is something higher than the greatest of all these gifts, and this is within the reach of the humblest and most ordinary believer. So Paul proceeds to unfold *the most excellent way*. Some suggest that he means that love is the more excellent way to the gifts. This is possible grammatically, but Paul’s

treatment of love does not leave the impression that it is simply a means to an end. Love is to be pursued for its own sake.” (*1 Cor.*, 176).

Conclusion: Paul has given us quite a discourse on spiritual gifts. We might sum up his teaching like this:

- 1) Many parts → one body 12:12-14
- 2) Many parts → each is important 12:15-20
- 3) Many parts → all are interdependent 12:21-26
- 4) Many parts → none are universal for all 12:27-30
- 5) Many parts → some are greater 12:31
- 6) Many parts → one head and Savior 12:12

It is this last point with which we conclude. We are the body of Christ! There are many members who have their role to play. But, and this is so critically important. There is one Christ, one Lord, one Savior, one Master, one King, and His name is Jesus. Follow Him, do your part, and watch His body thrive!

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