

# 1 Corinthians 12

Notice: *1 Corinthians 12-14* is about the tongues issue, although most people think that *1 Corinthians 13* is about love

## 1 Corinthians 12.1-3

**V1 - Why does Paul start with the word "now"?** This is a new section and a new subject (another problem at the church at Corinth)

-**What is this new section going to be about?** Spiritual gifts

-**Is this a subject that is seriously misunderstood today?** Absolutely

-**When were the spiritual gifts given to the disciples of Jesus?** Read Mark 16.15-20

-**What was to be their primary purpose?** To confirm the word

**Read Heb. 2.3** – The words of the Apostles were confirmed in the first century – the gifts had accomplished their purpose

-The spiritual gifts were like scaffolding on a building that under construction

-When the building is completed, the scaffolding is taken down and is not used again; it is not needed

**V2** – "mute" = speechless

-**What was the background of the Corinthian Christians?** They had been pagans and had a pagan background

**V3** – Read John 14.26 and John 16.13 – The apostles would speak by means of the Holy Spirit

-Paul: The Holy Spirit is guiding the words of the apostles; the real apostle will not be able to say, "Jesus is accursed," but will say, "Jesus is Lord"

## 1 Corinthians 12.4-11

**V4** – Does Paul indicate that one gift was more important than other gifts? No – that is one of his great themes in this passage – they all come from the same Holy Spirit

**V5** – Again, all the gifts come from the same source

**V6** – What else indicates that the gifts are equal? All from the same God

**V7**- What was the purpose of the gifts at the congregational level? For the good of every person (a common good)

**V 8-10** – The listing of the 9 spiritual gifts:

1. Word of wisdom – knowing the best thing to do (Don't you wish we had that gift today!)

2. Word of knowledge – investigation and research of subjects

3. Faith – strong faith, possibly enabling one to do miracles

4. Gifts of healing – restoring health

5. Effecting of miracles – powers attributed to God

6. Prophecy – the best course of action to take in the future; the New Testament was not yet

complete.

Thus, there was a real need for this gift

7. Distinguishing of spirits (see *1 John 4.1-3*) – There were many false teachers circulating in the churches

8. Tongues – the ability to speak in languages a person had never studied

-**Why would this be a good gift to have in the first century church?** For travelers (remember that there was still not a complete New Testament available yet)

9. Interpretation of tongues – **Why did Paul put tongues and the interpretation of tongues last?** Because the Corinthians thought they were the two greatest gifts

**V 11** – Notice again that the gifts were equal in importance – all came from the same Holy Spirit

-The Holy Spirit give them out as they were needed (not on the basis of how good or great a person might be)

## **1 Corinthians 12.12-19**

**Optional:** Do you remember the two types of comparisons in English class? Metaphor (without the use of *like* or *as*) and the simile (with *like* or *as*)

-What we have in this section is a long metaphor, comparing the church to the human body

**V 12** – **In what ways is the church like a living organism?** Many members, and all members are important

**V 13** – This verse is used by some groups to say that water baptism is not necessary

-**How do we know that water is used in Christian baptism?** *Acts 8.36* – the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch and *Act 10.47* – the baptism of Cornelius

-**Therefore, in what sense were we baptized by one Spirit and what did the Spirit have to do with our baptism?** – Answer: Through the word, the Holy Spirit led us to be baptized

-**What word is used three times in this verse?** The word "one"

-**What is the message therefore that Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to get?**

They were all members of the one body; the same Holy Spirit led them all into that one body

-Therefore, no one member was any more important than any other member

**V 14** – **What point is emphasized again?** There are many members by one body (the unity of the body)

**V 15** – **What is the next illustration to the metaphor (the first was: the body of Christ = a human body)?** The next: the human foot

-**Which is more important: a foot or a hand?** They are both important

-**What would the foot likely think?** That the hand was more important; therefore, the foot was not too important

-But for those of us who have had foot problems, we might disagree

-**What is the application of this verse to the question of speaking in tongues?** Those who did not have that gift should not feel inferior to those who did

**V 16** – **What is the next part of the metaphor?** The ear might feel inferior to the eye

-**What was Paul's conclusion?** The ear is just as much a part of the body as the eye is

-Therefore, neither the ear nor the eye should feel superior

**V 17 – What would be the advantage of the whole body being an eye?** Tremendous vision (imagine a 200 pound eye!); we could see for thousands of miles

**-But what would be the disadvantage of that?** No hearing

**-What would be the advantage of the whole body being an ear?** Tremendous hearing; we could pick up a sound hundreds of miles away

**-But what would we miss out on?** The sense of smell

**V 18 – Who designed the human body?** God (a message to those who believe in evolution)

-The design of the body shows that there was a designer

-Even the placement of the organs in the body shows design

-So every part of the body is there for a purpose

**-Have people always believed that?** No, older people will remember when tonsils were not considered important – they were removed, even when they were not infected

-But doctors now know that they are a part of the immune system, and without them we tend to get more infections

-Previous generations believed that the appendix was not necessary, but we now know that when the appendix is removed, cancer rates go up

-The thyroid was once considered worthless, but we know now its great importance

-The concept of "vestigial organs" (not necessary for the body, but left over from our "evolutionary" days) is outdated – everything is there for a purpose (that was God's design)

**-What is Paul's message in this section?** Without all these members, there would be no body, and life would not be possible

**-What was the message of this passage to the church at Corinth?** One member is not necessarily more important than another member, and one spiritual gift was not more important than the other gifts

**V 19 – What is Paul's summary at this point?** Without all these members with different talents and different gifts, the local congregation would suffer greatly

**-Can you imagine a congregation of all song leaders? How about a congregation of all preachers?** (Imagine the critics in the audience!)

**-Imagine a congregation of women who are great at teaching kindergarten kids?**

## **1 Corinthians 12.20-26**

**V 20 – What is Paul's point here?** It takes all kinds of organs to make up the human body

**V 21 – What is Paul's next part of the metaphor?** The eye might feel superior to the hand, and the head might feel superior to the feet

**V 22 – What is Paul's point about parts of the body that might seem weaker?** They can be very important (like the knees)

-the knee is a rather ugly part of the body; nobody says, "Wow, you have such beautiful knees!"

-but you know what trouble we are in if the knees fail us

**-Are there parts of the body that we don't like to talk about?**

**V 23** – As we grow older in life, we begin to have more respect for the less honorable parts of the body (Example: The inner ear and our hearing)

-We cannot see our heart or our blood vessels, but as we age, these unseen parts of our body become very important

-For anyone who has ever had an in-grown toenail, you know how painful such a small part of the body can be

**V 24** – Our "important" parts of the body do not need to be praised; we know the value of the eyes, ears, hands, etc.

-But many times the parts that have less honor are the ones that we have the most respect for ultimately

**V 25** – **What application does Paul want the Corinthian Christians to gain from this long metaphor?** That all parts of the body are important; there should be no jealousy of one part over the other parts

-There should be no divisions in the body because of jealousy

**V 26** – **What happens when one part of the body is suffering?** All parts of the body suffer also

-When we hit our thumb with a hammer, don't all the other parts of the body look at it, kiss it, ease up on it, hold it gently, etc.?

**-What happens when one member of the body receives honor?** The whole body is honored (as in winning a marathon, etc.)

## **1 Corinthians 12.27-31**

**V 27** – Here is the explanation of the giant metaphor: The church is like the human body

**-What are the members of the human body like?** The members of the Lord's church

**V 28** – **What were some of the positions (or skills) that the Christians had in the first century church?** Apostles, prophets, teachers (notice the value of teachers), performing miracles, healings, helps, administrations, tongues (see *Eph. 4.11* for another list)

**-Is there any significance to the order of things in this verse?** Tongues are last (as with every other passage on this subject)

**V 29** – Notice again that tongues and interpretation of tongues come last

**V 30** – All parts of the church can perform valuable services

**V 31** – **A more excellent way than what?** Than tongues (their pride, the source of arrogance)

Lessons for us today:

1. Everybody can perform some service for the church; God has given everybody at least one

talent that can be used in the Kingdom of God

2. A person with one skill should not feel arrogant concerning a person with another skill

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