

The Book of 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 12:28-31

Session 54: Body Principles

I want us to pick back up in our study starting at 1 Corinthians 12:13.

1 Corinthians 12:13 **For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.**

Paul says that every believer is baptized into one body. What body? The body of Christ. This is a spiritual baptism, not a physical, water baptism. This is an operation of God which takes place in us when we trust Christ as our Savior. This is the foundational doctrine for what Paul will teach us in Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ One Lord, one faith, **one baptism**, ⁶ One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

What is that “one baptism?” It is the one Paul introduced in 1 Corinthians 12:13, our baptism into the body of Christ. By baptizing us into Christ, we are made a part of His body. The body of Christ is made up of Jews and Gentiles without distinction.

1 Corinthians 12:13 **For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and **have been all made to drink into one Spirit.****

The phrase, “have been all made to drink into one Spirit” is talking about the Spirit of God being the source and instigator of our functional life. Because we have been positionally sanctified in Christ, we now have the ability to live for God in our daily lives. This is our practical sanctification. By walking after the Spirit, we receive “functional life.”

The Holy Spirit assembles the body, by making us individual members, and gives each of us the capacity to function as a member of that body, and the capacity for

the life of Christ to be lived in and through us. It is our job to recognize that the way we live for God is not by trying really hard in our flesh, but by “walking after the Spirit.”

In verses 14-27, Paul teaches us the details of this doctrine by using the physical body as an analogy.

1 Corinthians 12:14 For **the body** is not one member, but many.

Obviously, Paul has switched from talking about the body of Christ, to talking about a physical body. We know from the context. And he will continue with this metaphor all the way through verse 26.

1 Corinthians 12:15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling? ¹⁸ But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where *were* the body? ²⁰ But now *are they* many members, yet but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. ²² Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: ²³ And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness. ²⁴ For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked: ²⁵ That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another. ²⁶ And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Paul's points are as follows:

- A body, of necessity, is made up of many members (verse 14).
- Those members perform different tasks so that the body can fully function (verses 15-17).
- God has determined each member and its function (verse 18).
- One member cannot constitute a body, but a single body can have many members (verses 19-21).
- Even the seemingly unimportant members of our body are necessary and deserve honor (verses 22-24).
- The body needs harmony among its members, so that their care for each other is the same (verses 25-26).

For the Corinthians, all of this was in the context of the spiritual gifts, which means God gave many gifts, for the purpose of performing different tasks, to accomplish different operations or purposes. God chose which gift each person got. And although some gifts seemed to be less important than other gifts, they were all necessary. There were no unimportant gifts. There were no superfluous gifts. The gifts were designed to work in harmony with each other.

Even though the spiritual gifts are no longer in operation, the offices within the local assembly should be looked at with these principles in mind. These offices were detailed in our study on the book of Romans (Romans 12:5-8)

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

This is the verse which indicates that we apply these principles concerning our physical body to us being members of the body of Christ.

What Paul is about to do is deal with the appreciation for the diversities of gifts in the accomplishment of some operations that God wants to accomplish in the local assembly. There are gifts designed to accomplish those operations. But there is a problem; the members don't live in the local assembly all the time.

At appointed times, the members “come together,” to function as a local assembly. And when they did, they were to exercise the appropriate gifts to function as the “pillar and ground of the truth.” Therefore, Paul will say, the best gifts were those which edified and those were the gifts the Corinthians were supposed to “covet earnestly.”

But when the members of the assembly are not gathered together, there are other objectives that God wants accomplished. We will see an example of this when we look at the gift of tongues, which was designed to function with unbelieving Israel outside the assembly.

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Paul utilizes a numbering system; first, second, third, and if we were to keep numbering we would have a fourth (after that), and a fifth (then). By this, there were at least 5 categories of spiritual gifts. That means there are at least 5 different operations, and these ranked from best to least. (Some would say there are 8, but it depends on how you see the construction of the sentence.)

Here is what we have: first, apostles, secondarily, prophets and thirdly were those with the gift of teaching. The fourth rank would be miracles. The fifth rank would include healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

The important thing to understand is the diversities of operations that Paul is recognizing. The operation that is first has a gift associated with it to accomplish it. The second operation has a gift associated with it to accomplish it. A different operation is in third place and there is a gift associated with it to accomplish it, etc.

All of this is an amplification of verse 6.