

Corinthians - God Has Arranged the Parts of the Body

by J. Glyn Owen

The body of Christ is made up of many parts, each with a unique role and contribution to make, and salvation is not based on having a particular gift or serving a certain way, but rather on being received into the body of Christ out of sheer unqualified grace.

Duration: 53:26

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:14

Topics: "Body Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the unity and diversity of the body of Christ. The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12:14 and 20, states that the body is not made up of just one part, but of many. This principle is repeated to emphasize the importance of understanding that although the body of Christ has many parts, it is still one body. The speaker connects this concept to the diversity of spiritual gifts mentioned in verses 4-12, highlighting the need for unity and the proper functioning of each individual's gifts for the ministry of the church. The sermon encourages listeners to take this message to heart and fulfill their God-given ministry in unity and grace.

Transcript

Shall we pause together for a moment's prayer again and ask the Spirit of God that we should not speak about him in his absence. Let us pray. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, we worship you.

And though we acknowledge that we do not understand the mystery of the Trinity, we thank you that you have made it clear to us in your Word that what was eternally planned as our salvation was executed and made possible by your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and is being wrought into the whop and woof of our experiences by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And we pray now, O Spirit of God, that you'll not allow us to be speaking about you without having a sense of your presence among us. We want sincerely to learn the lessons that are taught in this challenging chapter of Scripture.

And we therefore cry with a sense of urgency in our hearts, asking that we shall be able to learn the lessons we need to learn in order as a community of your people, and also as individuals, to be able to honor you, the better and the greater, in our lives. O mighty Spirit, help us then, whether we speak or listen, to assess the truths we read and consider, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Amen. Now, we turn tonight in our consideration of this rather mammoth chapter, 1 Corinthians 12, we turn to verses 14 to 20. Actually, verse 12 began the second main section in this chapter, and the passage before us tonight is really a continuation of the theme that was introduced two weeks ago this evening.

Let me read again then, beginning with verse 14 and going on to verse 20. Now, the body is not made up of one part, but of many. And do I need to interject there that Paul has in mind the image of the human body as representative of the body of Christ, as a metaphor, standing for the body of Christ.

Now, the body is not made up of one part. It's just another way of saying my body is not just a hand or a leg or an ear or a lip. The body is not made up of one part, but of many.

If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact, and now we come to the crucial point, but in fact, God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, no just as he wanted them to be.

If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. Now again we say, not as a matter of course, but may the spirit of God help us to understand what is said in these words and to apply the significance of the whole message and the whole chapter to ourselves. In our prayer we have acknowledged that the entire Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, is involved in the work of our redemption.

The Bible is full of this. Our Christian faith is a Trinitarian faith. The whole of the Godhead is involved.

It's not just one third of the Godhead that was involved in saving you, Christian, or in saving myself. It's not just two thirds, but the whole Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Having said that, the New Testament does give us reason to believe that certain things are specially attributable to one or other of the persons of the Godhead.

Normally, it is the will of the Father that predominates in the councils of the Trinity, and it is God the Father who willed the redemption of the lost. What God the Father willed, God the Son procured. God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, in order to do what God the Father had decided should be done, namely, to purchase redemption for a company that no man can number, to procure redemption for you and for me and for a myriad others, whose names will be found written in the Lamb's Book of Life one day.

Now, what God the Father purposed, what God the Son has procured, is in turn made over to us, not by ourselves. If you and I were left to ourselves, we should never come to the cross of Christ for forgiveness. We'd be too proud.

If you and I were left to ourselves, we should never cry for a new heart. We're quite happy with the old heart we've got, even though it's full of sin. If you and I were left to ourselves, we should neither repent of sin nor believe in the Savior, but the Holy Spirit comes and deals with us, speaks to our minds, quickens our consciences, moves our emotions, and at last enlists our will, and we hear the gospel, and he draws us, and we follow on, until we come to believe, and we come to receive, and we come to become sons of God.

And all this is by the Spirit of God. We can do nothing in and of ourselves. It is only insofar as the Spirit of God comes in search of us, ministers to us, works upon us, reveals the glories of the Savior to us, and draws us with cords of ineffable love, and brings us to Christ and to God the Father.

Now, I say that because it is necessary to see the larger background against which alone we can properly consider a chapter like this. In this chapter, there are a number of negatives, because here Paul is writing to correct an attitude which was really causing a little bit of a problem in the church at Corinth. And so there are negative aspects that necessarily come in.

Certain things have gone wrong. There are divisions there. And even though the folk in Corinth had every conceivable gift, it would seem that the Spirit is desirous of giving to the church, they haven't got character.

They are involved in some of the grossest moral evils, the kind of thing that even pagans did not do and would not do. And so we could go on. There are problems in the church, and you have various kinds of things.

I don't need to stay with that now, but there are problems. One of the problems relates to the employment, to the usage of these amazing gifts of the Spirit given to his church, in order to exercise each person his ministry and the fellowship of the whole, and do God's will in their day and age. Now, because of that, there is, let me repeat, a negative aspect to this chapter.

On the other hand, I trust we can see behind the negative. You see, the reason Paul is writing is that there is a right usage of the gifts of the Spirit. There is a right attitude to the God who gives and endows his people to do their work.

And you see, what Paul is really after is that the Corinthian church should do the right thing, and accept the gift of God in the right way, and then employ them, use them as God meant them to be used, within the fellowship of the church, without splitting up and getting divided one over against the other, and much else. Now, I want you particularly to have your New Testaments open tonight, because I would like us to be working through this together. I promise you I won't be as long as I was this morning, but just have a look at the Scriptures.

Let's be working along together. Now, I want to start, I want to speak first of all about the principle that is established right there in verse 14. I'll be reading, by the way, from the New International Version.

Now, you got your eyes on verse 14. Now, the body is not made up of one part, but of many. And you notice that the Apostle Paul locks the passage by saying almost identically the same thing, in slightly different words, in verse 20.

As it is, then, there are many parts, but one body. Now, verse 14 and verse 20 say almost identically the same thing. So that, you see, Paul wants us to get the point.

This is the principle. He wants us to see that the body is not made up of just one limb or part, but the body of Christ is made up of many, many parts. But even so, it is made up of many parts, it is still but one body.

Now, this is necessary. You remember the way we've come, and really we've got to link up the parts of the argument here. In verses 4 to 12, Paul stressed the diversity of the gifts.

Will you just look back for a moment? Let me hurriedly read these verses from verse 4 to verse 12, really. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

There are different kinds of workings, but the same God works all of them in all men. You see, the emphasis is upon the different kind, different kind, different kind of this, that, and the other, right? Now, here it comes again. Now, to each one, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

To the one, there is through the Spirit, the message of wisdom, that's one. To another, the message of knowledge, by means of the same Spirit. To another, faith, that's another one, by the same Spirit.

To another, gifts of healing, by the same Spirit. To another, miraculous powers. To another, prophecy.

To another, the ability to distinguish between spirits. To another, the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues. And to still another, the interpretation of tongues.

All these are the work of one, the same Spirit, and He gives them to each man, just as He determines. Now, the emphasis in verses 4 to 12, then, is upon the diversity of the gifts. Paul is not pretending to refer to them all, but he is showing that there is a diversity here.

Now, in verses 12 and 13, he moves on to a slightly different stress. Now, he stresses, even though there are diversities of gifts given by God the Spirit to His people, nevertheless, that diversity is to be experienced within the most precious unity imaginable. Namely, the kind of unity that you have in a physical body and which you have in the spiritual body of Christ.

That is the unity of an organism. The body is one. My hand is part of my body, my foot is part of my body, it belongs to me.

We're all one, all the bits and pieces of us. You know, we're all one. There is but one body, and there are many parts.

And you can dismember my body or your own body for that matter. Try it with yourself, it's far better. You dismember your body as far as you like, but your body is one.

However many members you may like to say you have, they all comprise one body. So, you see, we've come now to the complementary truth. The first part stressed the vast diversity of gifts.

But now, says Paul, look, the vast diversity of gifts are gifts that are to be experienced and enjoyed and employed in this unity. And if this unity has come into the body, then something has gone wrong somewhere. Now the passage before us tonight, verses 14 to 20, proceeds to examine some of the implications of the diversity of the body of Christ.

And the emphasis falls again upon the words that we have quoted in verse 14 and 20. Now the body is not made up of one part, but of many. And yet it is a body.

It is a body, but it has many parts. It is a unity despite its diversity. It is a body despite the fact that it has many parts.

The emphasis here is upon the many parts in the one body. Now that, then, is the basic principle, I believe, with which Paul comes to this passage and with which he ends the passage. And when an

apostle begins and ends on the same theme, on the same note, you can take it, that's telling us something.

He wants us to lay hold upon this and he wants us to get it. Make sure that you've got the point. Now the next thing I would like you to notice, I would like to refer to it in this way, the possibilities that the apostle acknowledges.

Look at verses 15 and 16. If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, it would not, for that reason, cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, it would not, for that reason, cease to be part of the body.

Now here you see, the apostle Paul is focusing immediately upon affairs in Corinth, where people had divided and, among other things, I believe there were other reasons why they divided, as well as this, but one reason appears to have been, if we can rightly read between the lines, that some of the gifts of the Spirit were being so elevated and so prized that people became proud of certain gifts and kind of looked a little askance at others as not quite up to the value of these. And so people became strangely divided. You had a kind of spiritual snobbery.

I've got this gift, you haven't. Or, really, it's put the other way here, and we shall come to that in a moment. Because I haven't got your gift, then I don't even belong to the body.

But I want you to remember, it's the problem that we have here. These words would never have been written were it not for the problem in Corinth. And the first thing I want you to notice is the emergence here of an inferiority complex among some of the believers in Corinth.

These verses reflect the atmosphere current in Corinth at the time when Paul was writing. Now let me repeat what we've already said. Please let us get this.

Some folk in the church in Corinth felt that they were second-grade Christians, at best. And if they were not second-grade Christians, some of them went further and said they were not Christians at all, even though they had repented of their sins and they had acknowledged, according to the terms at the beginning of this chapter, that Jesus is Lord. Because of one reason, to which we shall come in a moment, they felt despite the fact that we trust Jesus Christ as Savior, we are not of the body.

We feel inferior to certain other people. An inferiority complex had been produced. Now, mark again.

Mark the way it is put here by Paul. Paul does not charge anyone in Corinth with saying to another Christian, look, because you haven't got the gift of tongues, you're not in the body. Paul doesn't say that.

Paul doesn't charge anyone with saying that. Neither does Paul charge anyone with this. Look, you haven't got the gift of tongues or the gift of interpretation of tongues.

Therefore, you're a second-grade Christian. Paul doesn't charge anyone with saying that. I hope we're getting this across.

Well, what's the matter here then? Well, what's the matter is this. Some of them have given such value and such prize. Some of them have considered some of the gifts of the Spirit to be so much more valuable and more precious than others that an atmosphere has been created.

That if you don't have these few gifts, then it doesn't matter what else you've got, you are lacking. And so, in turn, there has emerged in Corinth an inferiority complex. And that, you see, is what we have reflected in verses 15 and 16.

Let me read them to you again. If the foot should say, I'm not the hand, I therefore do not belong to the body. Now, you imagine it.

Look at your own self. Here's my poor foot, my left or my right, saying to me, well now, I like that hand of yours. That hand of yours is a great thing.

I'm not a hand. Perhaps the hand is more complex than the foot. I don't know.

But the foot looks up at the hand in Paul's imaginary picture and says, the foot says to the hand, I'm not a hand, therefore I don't belong to the body. Now, the thing doesn't make sense. Why should the foot say that? Well, the foot says that because, you see, an inferiority complex has been given to it.

It has been fed over and over again with the idea that the hand is so much more precious and more valuable than the foot. And if it is not a hand, it's nothing. Paul goes on and says virtually the same thing, though it changes in the next verse.

And if the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body. Now, I suppose the eye is the most complicated and the most wonderful organ of the body. I don't know.

We might not all agree on that, but certainly it's a wonderful member of the body. And Paul imagines the years looking up at the eye and having the capacity to assess things. And he's personifying them here, of course, for the sake of the argument.

He says, here's the year looking at the eye saying, well, I'm nothing like the eye. Poor me, I'm just a year. So I don't belong to the body.

You see, it's got an inferiority complex. It's seeing the glory of the eye, but it doesn't recognize that it itself has got any value whatsoever. Where does this come from? Well, it's very subtle.

It's pervaded the church, you see, because the notion has gone around if you don't speak in tongues and if you don't interpret tongues or if you haven't got the gift of healing, well, all the other gifts are of very little value to you. You're not a first-class Christian unless you've got some of these gifts which are, according to popular understanding, the most valuable. Now, my friends, we've got to be very careful if ever we get anywhere near that position.

Especially when Paul goes on to say this, you see, what he puts in the mouth of the foot and of the year, this statement, I am not in the body because I haven't got a gift that is greater. One of the greater gifts, one of the apparently more valuable gifts. Now that means, you see, Paul means, I believe for us to understand that the theory was being voiced abroad in Corinth that unless you've got one of these highest loftiest gifts, then you're not a Christian.

Now this is Reformation Sunday, and I'm glad to have the opportunity to refer to it, though I'm bringing it in the side here. Perhaps we should have taken the whole service for it. But the major doctrine of the Reformation under Martin Luther and his successors was this, that a man is saved by grace alone, in Christ alone, and by faith alone.

And you do not belong to the body of Christ because you've got a gift of the Spirit. You are not received into the body because you have a gift to serve. You are received into the body of Christ out of sheer unqualified grace.

And what is more, you and I are maintained in the body out of sheer grace. And if I have a gift which is an important gift, shall we say, in a given day and age, then that is not due to me at all, and I should not glory in it. Glory is His who loved me and gave Himself for me, and whose Holy Spirit gave me the gift I've got, I have not, but that I have received.

We came into the world without anything, and we shall go out of the world without anything but what God in Christ has given us. Now, if folk are said to be less than Christian purely because they do not have a particular gift, then there is a heresy abroad. That great biblical doctrine of justification by faith has gone out by the front door or the back door or one of the windows somewhere.

It's gone out, and the basis of salvation is made something other than the sheer grace of God. Paul wasn't writing all these chapters for nothing. He wasn't fighting.

He wasn't beating the air, as he says later on. He was dealing with a real problem. They were skating on thin ice.

What is more, we have here the expression of an improper conclusion. Paul continues to speak of parts of the body as he has personified them, and he makes the foot and he makes the ear to speak. But recognizing the strange mode of speech employed, the conclusions of foot and ear are totally unwarranted.

And why are they unwarranted? Because God has not said that tongue speaking or healing or any group of his gifts given to his church are in any wise superior to other gifts that he may give. Now, I hope I'm not misunderstood. I believe in the fact that these gifts are abroad still in the church, and that the church could not be a church without these gifts.

I do not see how that is practicable. But nevertheless, we must see things in perspective. You do not assess a gift according to what the fashion of the day is.

You only assess the gift that God has given according to its capacity to fulfill the purpose of the one who gave the gift. That is God. He determines how valuable it is.

He determines how precious it is. He determines how important it is. We don't.

And we must be very, very careful, lest the fashion in the church and the love of something that is exceptionally emotional, the love of these things rob God of his glory and disrespect. Now, you see, it would be a very great tragedy for us if anywhere we did encounter in scripture, for example, the fact that you need to speak in tongues in order to prove that you're a Christian. Have you ever contemplated for a moment what a predicament we would be in if that were so? You see, we have a Savior.

We have a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Bible goes out of its way to say that God gave not the Spirit to him with in measure. In other words, as God gave the Spirit to his Son in the flesh, the incarnate Lord Jesus, he gave him the Holy Spirit without any qualification whatsoever.

No let, no hindrance, no qualification whatsoever. Jesus, therefore, must have experienced throughout his life the fullness of the ungrieved spirit in his life. Yet we never read of him speaking in tongues.

And do you notice that? Never. Therefore, I conclude, it is not necessary for the man who is filled with the Spirit of Jesus to have to speak in tongues. And to say so is to impugn the very spirituality of the Son of God.

Moreover, I don't want to pursue that thought, but I think it needs to be said in the climate of today. I think we need to notice one other thing here before we turn from it, namely that right at the end of this chapter there are a number of questions asked. And you know that in the Greek language the way you ask a question presupposes the answer.

For example, some questions are asked and you can only answer them negatively. Other questions are asked and you have to answer them positively. Now at the end of this chapter, beginning with verse 27, there are many, many questions, quite a number of questions asked, and they demand not just, not just they may require a negative answer, they demand a negative answer.

And one question that is asked which demands a negative answer is this, do all speak in tongues? And the answer demanded by the grammar of the text is, no, they do not. Just as all are not apostles, all are not prophets, all are not workers of miracles, etc., etc., not all speak with tongues. Now I'm only using that to illustrate a principle.

The principle is this, if we elevate any one of the gifts of the Spirit to a place beyond its biblical warrant, then we create in some people an inferiority complex. And we've got people in the church. Every pastor will tell you, you have people who have developed an inferiority complex.

I haven't got what so-and-so has got. I can't speak like so-and-so. I can't do what so-and-so does.

My dear friend, that's not the point. The point is this, are you a limb in the body? Find your gift. Make sure you've got your gift and you recognize it and use it.

God doesn't want you to have my gift. He doesn't want me to have your gift. He wants you to find your gift and use it.

And don't try and copy somebody else. This is one reason among many why we have so many breakdowns among Christians. They're like square pegs in round holes.

They hear of somebody here that's had a wonderful experience, I must get it too. I'll do anything I can to get it. But you see, that's not the way.

Read the Word of God. Wait upon God in His presence. Let God give you what He wants to give you.

Not because somebody else has got it, but because God in His sovereign will purposes that you should have this and employ it for His purpose. That's the reason. Now, if you have the gift of tongues, I hope I do not, I did not mean to disparage this gift and I don't want to do it.

If you have this gift of the Spirit, my friend, thank God for it. See that you employ it according to the biblical principles to the glory of God and the good of others. Not to divide the church, but to keep it united.

Not to bring dishonor to the name of the Lord Jesus, nor of the Father, but to honor the Christ, to magnify the Savior, and to bring men and women to God, to a knowledge of Him as their own Father in Christ. If you don't have this gift, see what gift you've got. I guess this is one of the most important, one of the most urgent needs in some of our lives, is to discover our own gifts.

Have you ever paused for a moment? Have you ever, with a Bible open in front of you, and with a knowledge that God is with you in your bedroom or in your study or wherever you have your quiet time, have you ever seriously examined yourself and sought to discover what gift God has given you before you ask for anything else? And having so discovered, then be content with it. God has chosen to give it to you. And whatever it is, if God has given it, and God has given it to you to employ to His glory, my friend, dance with joy because of it.

If you haven't a gift that is recognizable, then eagerly desire the greater gifts, as Paul says. And yet I will show you a more excellent way. Now, though the possibility is acknowledged of someone unnecessarily and wrongly assuming that in the absence of the most spectacular gifts of the Spirit, they are either inferior to others or not even members of the body, Paul counters that false notion.

And you notice in verses 15 and 16, he repeats certain words. And again, I say to you, when Paul repeats, be careful. You have exactly the same words in verse 15 as in verse 16.

If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body. Now here come the words. It would not for that reason cease to be part of the church of the body.

You have the same thing in the next verse. If the ear should say, because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body. It would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

No Christian can dismember you from the body of Christ. If the Lord Jesus has received you, if you've been baptized by the Lord Jesus into the body of Christ and you've been received and His Spirit, you have drunk. According to the language of verse 13, you have drunk the Spirit so that the Spirit has been received by you and you've been fertilized inwardly.

And you know what it is to have a well of water within you, springing up into everlasting life, to quote Jesus. Then my friend, no one can amputate you from the body of Christ. Be sure of that.

And don't let anyone try. Come back to Scripture. Hide in Scripture.

Hide in the Savior's promises. Let us take this teaching seriously then, and at least in this way. If somebody has got a more spectacular gift than mine, Lord save me from envying it, because that means that I cast a reflection on the gift you gave me.

And may the Lord save us from creating a sort of inferiority complex in people who haven't got the more spectacular gifts of the Spirit. Now I come to the last point. A necessity affirmed, and I'm through for tonight.

Verses 17 to 19. And the necessity affirmed here, of course, is the one body needs many gifted parts or members or limbs, if you like. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? See, Paul is answering the question here now.

Some people in Corinth wanted everybody to have a particular gift or one or two of the more excellent gifts as they thought. Let's all go out for speaking in tongues. Let's all go out for this or that.

You see, what would happen, says Paul, if that took place? Well, he compares it to this. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact, he says, as a matter of fact, there's no problem. God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be.

If they were all one part, where would the body be? There would be no body at all if there were only just one part, one limb multiplied a thousand times over. Now, let's dwell with this for a moment. First of all, Paul writes interrogatively.

He asks questions. Paul deems the truth so very self-evident that he simply asks two questions in verse 17 without supplying the answers. He thinks the answer is so evident, so obvious, that he doesn't reply.

Now, the point he's making is that the church is a body and not just a limb or a member. As a body, it requires a multiplicity of complementary gifts in order to function, so that by way of illustration of the principle, he asks again, let me repeat, if the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? If they were all one part, where would the body be? You see, the body needs a multiplicity of parts. Otherwise, it isn't a body.

And the Church of Jesus Christ is meant to be a body comprising many parts in unity, a body, not just an organ. We need the multiplicity. Now, you cannot have a properly functioning body with simply an eye or an ear or even the two of them.

Of course, I'm saying something which is so obvious it sounds almost crazy to say it. I want to pull myself up when I say that. But you can't have a body made up of just eyes, you see, can you? It would be a monstrosity.

Now, that's exactly what a church would be if 90% of the members had the gift of tongues and other people had no other gifts. It would be a monstrosity. Because, you see, what we need in a body is not just one gift multiplied all over, but we want the complementarity of gifts.

We want people with all the gifts that are necessary for this congregation to do the work of God in this situation at this time to God's glory. Have you got it? You know, it's as telling as that in the moment you want to, the moment you see it, you don't know whether you want to smile or cry. But there are many people in the church of Jesus Christ today and they go around and the one thing they want is for everybody to get the gift that they think is most important.

And you see what that would be? It would be just like trying to make a body out of 2,000 mouths or 2,000 ears or 2,000 tongues or 2,000 limbs, 2,000 lips. But you see, you need a toe, you need a foot, you need an ear, you need a nose, you need all sorts of things to make a body. And therefore, my friend, we must leave this matter of the gifts with God.

He knows what He wants with this corpus of believers. He knows what the work is and He knows what He wants done and He knows how to endow us with His gifts. And the thing for us to do is this.

It's so to walk humbly before our God that we are dependent upon Him and waiting upon Him and asking Him day by day, Lord, if I have the gift to do this day's work, please bless me and fill me with your spirit

that I can do it to your glory. And if I haven't got the gift to do this day's work, oh Lord, in your goodness, give it to me and I go out in the faith that you will. But I don't want the gift just because it's popular or other people are talking about it.

That's not the criterion. The criterion is this, what does God want me in this community to do today? And He will qualify us and capacitate us for that, not to enjoy ourselves. Secondly, Paul writes positively, put positively, the multiplicity and complexity of the charismata are the provision of God in His sovereignty and wisdom in order to create and perfect the kind of body He has planned the church to be.

Now, listen how he puts it, verse 18. But in fact, says Paul, God has, past tense, God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be. I can't go into that in detail.

It raises a lot of questions. But let's get the main thrust. As a matter of fact, says the Apostle Paul, you know, God hasn't waited to consult you in Knox Church in the heart of Toronto as to what gifts you want.

You know, it's a terrible thing when God doesn't consult me or consult you. But when He baptized us into the church of His Son, He gifted us without consulting us to do the work He requires of us. He may add to those gifts, but He did in measure give us such gifts when we were baptized into the church.

And He didn't consult us. He's done it, says Paul. In fact, God has arranged the parts of the body with their several capacities, the hand, its own capacity, the eye, its own capacity, the nose, its capacity, the lips and the mouth, their capacity and so forth.

God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them. And how? Just as He wanted them to be. Now, if that is true, somebody may very rightly retort to me and say, well, then why aren't we using them? Now, the answer to that is probably in terms of having to acknowledge that we grieve the Spirit a thousand times over.

And some of us feel that we can cope in the flesh and the power of the flesh without the Spirit. And we try. And some of us do not live in dependence upon the Spirit at all.

We walk by sight and not by faith. Therefore, it's pathetically evident that what we do, we do in our own strength. But God's sovereign plan is to build the church as it is presented here under the image of a body and to give to the body.

He has given to the body such gifts as he deems the body to require in any age, in any place, at any time. God does not simply plan things that way. He has actually put His plan into operation.

Now, it is too bad if what pleases God does not please us. But I want to suggest to you that the fault is not with God. The fault is with us.

And we have to find our way to come into alignment with His will and His word, rather than try to coerce Him to fall into alignment with us. How then do we draw to a close? Well, let's draw to a close where we began. We must never forget the positive background to this.

Why is Paul taking trouble to write? Because the ministry of the Holy Spirit is so absolutely strategic. You see, if we were really sensitive to spiritual things, the last thing we would want to do in this life, in this world, would be to grieve the Holy Spirit. Because to do so is inevitably to fall back upon the frailty of our flesh with its folly as well as its frailty.

And it leaves us utterly incapable of doing the things of God in God's way and to God's glory. The only means for us to do the will of God in God's way is by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. And that's why Paul is taking all this trouble.

And that's why he's writing. Something's gone wrong. He wants to get at the bottom of it.

And he wants these people to see that there's an atmosphere that has emerged in Corinth, though he doesn't blame anyone for positively challenging another person and saying, look, you're a second-class Christian or you're not a believer, you're not a member of the body. He doesn't go so far as that. But he does say this by implication.

You are all responsible for allowing a notion to circulate among you that has made some of the brethren have an inferiority complex, which they need never have. You can't dismember from the body of Christ whom I have placed in, says God. And the fact that he or she doesn't have one of the gifts that you may prize mostly doesn't mean a thing.

I have chosen the gifts necessary and I've chosen the gifts according to my pleasure, not yours. He says it here. Therefore, bow to my will.

Put things right. Humble yourselves. Be forgiven that once again, you may know the sweetness of peace among yourselves and the work of grace going on among you that men may grow morally and show the fruit of the spirit as well as have the gifts of the spirit.

And as you grow in unity and in grace, you may fulfill the ministry that God has given you in your day and generation. Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is talking to me and it's talking to you, I'm sure. And whatever God is saying to us tonight, let's take it to heart.

For the world needs the ministry of Knox as of every other Christian congregation. And it needs us functioning as God meant us to function in his power as a body with every person who has been gifted of God, working and involved to the hilt to his glory. Let us pray.

Our heavenly father, we thank you for your word. Without it, we would be completely lost. It was the word that became a lamp to our feet when we were discovered to be in the death of sin, lost and undone.

And it showed us the way out of darkness and misery and lostness. It is that same word that has guided us out of many miseries and trials and through tribulations perhaps since that day. And we thank you for the light it casts across our pathway tonight.

Oh, Lord, be pleased to bless these words to us and enable us to honor you father, son, and Holy Spirit with a faith and an obedience that is unqualified that we may do our task to your praise and serve to your glory according to your purpose. Forgive us our sins in Jesus name. Amen.

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