

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**Spirit Filled Living in a Broken and Fallen World**  
**1 Corinthians 12-13: Strengthening the Body of Christ in Love**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - March 19, 2017**

Preliminaries

- Commissioning of the Aldreds
- Celebrate the closing of the land sale: Setting sail
- Volunteers - Children's ministry champions, Easter champions

Let's dive into our subject looking again at chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians and considering the work of the Holy Spirit on the church. It is the idea of spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts have been the subject of conversation and not a small amount of controversy since early on in the church. At least three times Paul teaches specifically on spiritual gifts in his letters so it seems to be important to him. The first non-biblical writing found on Spiritual gifts was by the Justin Martyr in 150 AD, at second generation believer and apologist had observations from the early church:

Daily some [Jews] are becoming disciples in the name of Christ and leaving the path of error. These are also receiving gifts, each as he is worthy, illumined through the name of Christ. For one receives the spirit of understanding, another of counsel, another of strength, another of healing, another of foreknowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God. ~ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 39, 150 AD

They have been so interesting and sometimes misunderstood that I think it is possible to at once give them too much attention and to seek artificially for them in various forms and then sometimes to pay too little attention altogether and virtually have no understanding of a person's divine gift and what it could be for. Let's say our word of warning again - As I said last week, when you start placing so much attention on them that you get distracted by them or enamored of one over another or jealous of certain believers – then you have started down a bad path. It is important to remember at all times in this discussion that the whole point of bestowing spiritual gifts is to uplift and strengthen the church.

**Spiritual gifts are to strengthen the Body**

**Romans 1:11** I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you.

When Paul writes on the gifts, it is really a way to embark on an even more critical conversation. Paul is essentially saying, "I'm going to tell you a bit about spiritual gifts because I want you to understand an even more important doctrine, that of the nature of the church as the Body of Christ. This doctrine of the Body is really important!! Paul wants us to understand that now each of us and all of us together are the body of Christ.

**"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."**

**1 Corinthians 12:27-31** Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. <sup>28</sup> And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup> But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

That is a pretty impressive list of gifts and callings – ***apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, speaking with tongues*** . . . it seems like that list leaves most of us out.

But in other passages we get other gifts that seem to include more of us . . . ***serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leadership, hospitality, evangelism, shepherding, and mercy***. And the lists

provided in the scriptures I don't believe are ever meant to be exhausted but more representative or illustrative. He shares about the range of gifts not to highlight our differences but to communicate how much we need each other and to promote unity in the Body. That we might all pull on the oars together in the same direction to pull from our nautical reference of earlier.

In Romans 12 vs 4 and 5 it sound a lot like our study this morning ***“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ.”*** We, though many, are one body in Christ, and the focus is to act like one unified body.

When Paul speaks of the church as a body he moves back and forth between two meanings that overlap. One is that *the universal church*—every believer in Christ who has ever lived—is the body of Christ. That's the invisible, spiritual, universal church of all believers, the body of Christ. But the other meaning is that that Paul thinks of *each local church* as the body of Christ as well. ***“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”***

What that means is that as each of us is in *relationship* to Christ, we are therefore in a familial relationship to each other. If I am Christ's brother and you are Christ's sister, then you are my sister. By creating relationships with himself, Christ creates the relationships in the body. But the truth here is deeper than that. I want to come back to that phrase found in the Romans study – the idea that we are one “in Christ.” What it means to be “in Christ” far more profound than the human analogy of family relations suggests. That would be precious enough. But it's far more and far better than that.

This means that when you trust Christ as your Savior and Lord and your treasure, a union is established between Christ and you in such a way that everything in Christ that can be shared will be shared with you. Everything that he is, and everything that he has that *can* be shared *will* be shared with you. And there is only one thing that can't be shared—his deity, and its unique God-defining attributes (like omnipotence and omniscience and eternity). But everything else that Christ is and has is yours in him. We experience all of this *together* in one body.

“So we, though many, *are one body in Christ.*” Redeemed together. Justified together. Forgiven together. Born again together. Loved by God together. Perfected together. Living forever together—and all of this glorious unity created in Christ and for the glory of Christ.

The biblical picture is clear: to be a Christian—to belong to Jesus Christ—is to be part of his body and “individually members of one another.” This is why here at 4Cs that we have Community Life groups, so that you can experience a deeper walk with each other and thereby a deeper walk with Christ. That's why we work hard to help you find one that frees you to serve and be served in relationships of love.

It is an amazing calling and an amazing identity: being the body of Christ and individually members of one another. There is more to be discovered about yourself in Christ than you ever dreamed. And Christ will be more and more honored by every discovery you make.

***But there is another piece of this. You have to want it. Many consider themselves saved in Christ but want little to do with the church and really have no interest in letting God have a say in their lives. They live with little faith and thereby little power. Sadly with little fruit as well. AW Tozer said . . .***

***Spiritual gifts and graces come only to those who want them badly enough. It may be said without qualification that every man is as holy and as full of the Spirit as he wants to be. He may not be as full as he wishes he were, but he is most certainly as full as he wants to be. ~ Aiden Wilson Tozer***

This bestowing of gifts to the church makes us one even in our diversity. Just as an elbow is so different than a forearm, still they are one – the elbow and the forearm and even the big toe suffer and rejoice together.

## Suffering and rejoicing together

**1 Corinthians 12:24b-26** But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup> If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

We have gifts and we experience the power of the body. But there is more – but there is still more that Paul wants us to understand – that there is a still more excellent way.

## A still more excellent way!

**1 Corinthians 13:1-3** If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Gloria and Michael were studying this passage and they commented on how the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of I Corinthians really is an extension of the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter and I agree. I think when the early editors were placing the chapters and verses to the scriptures they inadvertently divided up this one idea of strengthening the body through love. It is a continuation of how the gifts can be misused and misconstrued when viewed as though they were simply offered to glorify an individual. They are not. Gifts are given to be given away in love and in so doing strengthen the body for good works. Now when we read about this love of God, it all starts to make sense. We really shouldn't read about love without understanding that it is about love first and foremost for and to the Body of Christ. Let's read this famous passage now with the church in mind . . .

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7** <sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

One final thought, these gifts that we get – I believe that they are not static one time use it or lose it. God is looking for us to seek him and to expect him moment by moment. You may have one or two abiding gifts but God is not unwilling to bless you for the sake of His Bride the church at any given moment in any divinely willed manner.

If and when a horror turns up you will then be given Grace to help you. I don't think one is usually given it in advance. "Give us our daily bread" (not an annuity for life) applies to spiritual gifts too; the little daily support for the daily trial. Life has to be taken day by day and hour by hour. ~ *CS Lewis*

You are not alone and we together are not powerless. Hour by hour we were meant to experience Christ in the Body. You are the Body of Christ and you are the Gifted in Christ and you matter more than you could ask or think. It's never too late to set your sails and to wait for the wind of the Holy Spirit to fill them – to long for His 100-fold blessings for the sake of the church. For our Church. The new unleashed church called Christ Community Covenant Church – gifted and powerful and ready for uncharted waters!