

# The Body of Christ (contd)

## What is a Church? Part 2

### 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Summary: Three emphases: 1) Diversity of parts (every part important) See which of the one another's you excel at. Your gifts dispense grace, which is the wonderful benefit from the presence of God. 2) Unity of purpose, and 3) Interdependence in function. Work toward better connections. Get grace from some parts and supply it to others.

coordinate His body.

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## Review

As a brand new church we are devoting our first study to figuring out exactly what the Bible says a church is supposed to be so we can conform ourselves right from the very beginning to the model Scripture gives us for a church. We are concerned not primarily with what people are looking for in a church but with what God is looking for in a church, and so we are studying the five main metaphors God gave us to describe what He wants the Church to be.

The first one we are studying is that the Church is the body of Christ. In the last lesson we saw a couple different points of significance to that. For one thing, as His body we are the physical presence of Christ in this world. That means your attitude toward the church is your attitude toward Christ. And the way you treat the Church is the way you treat Christ.

We also saw that Jesus Christ accomplishes His work of filling the world with fullness through us. We are His fullness, which means we are the great expression of the glory, power and presence of God.

That is accomplished when the body builds itself up to maturity as each part does its work ministering to one another. That's what our second hour is designed for – to give us a chance to begin carrying out the “one another” commands. We learned all that last week from Eph.4.

Remember I told you there are two very clear, very detailed passages that teach us what God means when He calls us the body of Christ. One of them is Eph.4; the other is 1 Cor.12. This is the most detailed passage in the Bible about the body of Christ. There the word “body” is used 18 times in 16 verses.

## The Body functions through interdependent, unified, varied gifts/roles

**1 Cor.12:12-27 For as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body-- so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. <sup>14</sup> So the body is not one part but many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, "Because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body," in spite of this it still belongs to the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, "Because I'm not an eye, I don't belong to the body," in spite of this it still belongs to the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? <sup>18</sup> But now God has placed the parts, each one of them, in the body just as He wanted. <sup>19</sup> And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> Now there are many parts, yet one body. <sup>21</sup> So the eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" nor again the head to the feet, "I don't need you!" <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, all the more, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are necessary. <sup>23</sup> And those parts of the body that we think to be less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unpresentable parts have a better presentation. <sup>24</sup> But our presentable**

**parts have no need of clothing. Instead, God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the less honorable, <sup>25</sup> so that there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same concern for each other. <sup>26</sup> So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. <sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it.**

The point of the passage is to remind us of some obvious truths about how our bodies work and how that illustrates the way God designed the Church to work. And the three things that stand out most are:

1. Diversity of parts
2. Unity of purpose, and
3. Interdependence in function.

## **1. Diversity of parts**

The parts are all different – that is the diversity. (v.12 – **many parts**) The diversity of parts is crucial for the functioning of the body. A body made up of nothing but elbows is not going to accomplish much. In fact, it is not a body at all. If you have a church where everyone has the same role, that is not a church. It is ridiculous to despair because you don't have the same role as someone else, because diversity of gifts and functions and roles is critical for the functioning (and even the existence) of the body.

And the obvious corollary to that is that each part needs to do what it was designed to do. If the ear tries to do the talking or the knee tries to do the seeing nothing good will come of that.

### ***Every part important***

The other corollary is that every part has some important task. There are no spiritual tonsils. Paul is very clear that no individual can look at the body and say, “you have no need of me.” That is obvious from vv.21,22. So if you think you are not needed you are thinking the opposite of what the Bible says.

**Eph.4:16 the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**

One of the problems with you just deciding to opt out of ministry and sit on the bench for a while (aside from the fact that it is blatant disobedience and rebellion against God and it belittles God by thinking little of His calling on your life), is the fact that each part in the body has an assigned task. That means no one else can fill in for you. We can not do your job because we have to do ours.

Sometimes sports people will talk about how much depth a team has. When the starters get injured and can not play, there are some reserves who fill in. That group is called “the bench.” And if a team has a really strong bench, so that even without their starters they really have a strong team, that team is said to be deep. In that sense the Church is not very deep. It is not deep at all, because it has no bench. Every single person in the church is a starter, and so if you are unfaithful to carry out your task it will simply go undone.

If that makes you feel guilty perhaps you need to repent over some unfaithfulness and get back on track. But I hope this concept doesn't just hit you in a negative way, because it really should be a source of encouragement and joy in your heart. It is such a fantastic reality that God has given us *meaningful* work. If God set things up such that any time I was unfaithful He would just bring in someone off the bench to take over, then my work really would not have much meaning. If you have some important responsibility, but that thing is guaranteed to get done whether you do it or not, there isn't all that much meaning to your doing it.

The Christian life is not like an amusement part ride where you get in a car with a fake steering wheel and the car follows the right track no matter how you turn the wheel. God has put our hands on real steering wheels, and if we turn the wrong way He will allow us to go the wrong way. And if we stop altogether we will be stopped.

I am not saying that God never overrides our decisions. But I am saying that God very often allows important things to go undone or to be done poorly if we are unfaithful. He has given us meaningful work. He's given us what Paschal called “the dignity of causation.” If I sit around and watch TV all week

instead of working hard at studying God's Word, the sermons are not going to be as edifying as if I am faithful to my calling. God does not call someone in off the bench and say, "Get that sermon done for Darrell while he watches TV." There are exceptions, but very often God will simply allow the sermon to be poor that week if I am unfaithful. And He will allow all of you to suffer the ill effects of that. This is not a game. God has given you real, important, meaningful, crucial work and there is not always a safety net under you.

And that should cause joy in your heart because there a fundamental human craving for meaning and importance. No one wants to do meaningless work, and God has not given you meaningless work. He has given you crucial, important, meaningful work. The downside to that is if you fail, there are significant consequences. However an upside is if you are faithful, there are huge rewards. And another upside is that your life and work in the Church really, really matters.

So when a Christian looks at the Church and says, "You have no need of me" that is unbelief and rebellion against God. Perhaps you are thinking, *I don't want to be in rebellion against God. It is not that I'm unwilling to serve. I just don't know what my calling is.*

Last week we talked about the kinds of things every member of the body is called to do. If you want to start and the very core, and you want to focus on the most basic, most essential, most important aspect of your calling, then focus your energy on fulfilling the one another commands that we talked about last time. But beyond that you also have a unique, individual calling. So how do you discern what that is?

## **How to find your gifts and calling**

### ***Gifts***

One thing that's very clear from 1 Cor.13 is that the operation of the Church is all about gifts. If you think of the operation of the church as the administration and bureaucracy and the programs, you need to adjust your perspective. The functioning of a church is the ministry of the spiritual gifts by the people. If the body is not being built up and edified and strengthened by means of the individuals in the church using their gifts, then the church is dormant (even if it has 10,000 programs and 14 campuses and a huge staff and it is the busiest place in town). If the one anothers are not being carried out and the people are not using their gifts to build one another up, the church is inert.

#### ***What are Spiritual Gifts?***

Spiritual gifts are simply capacities God has given you to excel in a specific aspect of building up the body. As you work hard at carrying out the one another commands and the other things God has called us all to be doing you will notice over time that some of those things come a little easier to you than to the rest of us. When you minister in that area, you find that people are especially helped. That is your gift.

We are all supposed to be compassionate toward one another, teach and admonish one another, exhort one another, have mercy on one another, encourage one another, strengthen one another, etc. As you do those things you will notice over time that people tend to really be helped by your ministry in one or more of those areas - more than they are by the average person in the church. That is your gift.

Your gift is not automatically an ability – it is a *capacity* or *potential*. Part of my gift is the gift of teaching, but when I first started teaching I was awful. It takes a lot of work and learning and training and practice to develop your gift and to fan it into flame. But if you do all that, you will find that people will be especially helped by you in that area, because that is an area where the power of the Holy Spirit is flowing through you in an extreme way. (So whenever you are especially helped by someone, make sure you let that person know so he can figure out what his gift is.)

#### ***Grace Dispensing***

In our natural thinking we might be tempted to say, "Of course everyone should focus on their area of giftedness - even in the world, each member of an organization should do what he or she does best." But I want to make sure we all understand that there is a lot more to it than that. The reason we should all use our gifts is not just because it is common sense for everyone to do what they do best. There is much bigger reason than that.

**1 Pe.4:10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.**

Literally the Greek says, “as good stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” A steward is someone you hire to manage your estate. And according to 1 Pe.4:10 God has put us on as stewards of His grace. He doesn’t just dispense all of His grace directly to people who need it. He gives you a large supply of it, and then commissions you to be in charge of dispensing it to others. And that happens primarily through your gift.

I would like to draw your attention to God at this point. There are a lot of wonderful things about God – things that, if your eyes are opened to them will make you deeply love God and be filled with joy. And one of those wonderful things about God (we call them attributes) is the fact that God is gracious – He gives us grace.

My highest goal in this sermon is for you to walk out of here today especially happy and thrilled to be a child of a God who gives grace. So first let’s take a look at what grace is.

The word “grace” means gift. It is some good thing God gives you for free. And so by definition it can’t be earned or deserved. Ro.11:5 says that you have been chosen by grace, and...

**<sup>6</sup> if by grace, then it is not by works; otherwise grace ceases to be grace.**

So by definition it is a gift that is undeserved. What kind of gift? Salvation? Yes.

**Eph.2:8 by grace you are saved<sup>1</sup>**

But that is not all there is to grace. There is much more. After you become a Christian, according to Eph.2:7 God has immeasurable riches of grace that He bestows upon you in Christ Jesus. In the last lesson we studied God’s fullness (the abundance of all the good things God has to offer). Another word for that is grace.

**John 1:16 we have all received grace upon grace from His fullness,**

Grace is what comes from the fullness of God.

When writers of Scripture wanted to wish someone the best possible thing, they would say “grace to you.” And when they wanted someone’s fullest wellbeing, safety and success they commended them to God’s grace (Acts 15:40).

From the negative side we could define grace this way – grace is the opposite of being resisted by God.

**1 Pe.5:5 ... God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**

When you are proud God resists you, opposes you, fights against you; but when you are humble God gives you grace. So grace is basically the same thing as the favorable presence of God, that we learned all about in our study of Ps.63 the past few months in the Bible study.

All those wonderful things that come to you when you enjoy the favorable presence of God – that is grace. And there are many examples in Scripture.

According to Heb.13:9 grace is the only thing that is able to strengthen you, so if you are weak grace is what you need. According to Acts 20:32 grace builds you up. And according to Heb.4:16 grace is what gives you the strength you need right at the moment you need it.

**Heb.4:16 let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**

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<sup>1</sup> See also Acts 15:11 and Ro.3:24.

According to 1 Cor.1:4-6 God's grace enriches you in every way - in the way you think, in the way you talk, and in the way you act. It is grace that enables godliness in you. It is God's grace that makes you able to believe in the first place. (Acts 18:27) According to 2 Cor.1;12 God's grace enables you to be sincere and pure.

According to 2 Cor.8:1-9 it is grace that enables you to do godly things out of joy. God requires that we not only do good, but that we like doing it, and that our enjoyment of the good be so powerful that it is what drives us to do it. The example in 2 Cor.8 is the good deed of generous giving.

**2 Cor.8:1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace that God granted to the churches of Macedonia: <sup>2</sup> during a severe testing by affliction, their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed into the wealth of their generosity. <sup>3</sup> I testify that, on their own, according to their ability and beyond their ability, <sup>4</sup> they begged us insistently for the privilege of sharing in the ministry to the saints, <sup>5</sup> and not just as we had hoped. Instead, they gave themselves especially to the Lord, then to us by God's will.**

**<sup>9</sup> For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: although He was rich, for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich.**

You read that and think, "How was it possible for them to be in extreme poverty and to be undergoing painful suffering and in that condition they find a way to scrape together a very large financial gift for the Christians down in Jerusalem who were in need - and not only to do that but to be driven to do it by joy?" How is that possible?

It is possible by grace. That is the effect grace has. And according to v.9 it was that same grace that drove Jesus to give up the riches of heaven and become poor for our sake.

If you desire some virtue in your life - maybe you want greater patience or greater generosity or greater self-control or greater love; whatever it is, if you receive grace from God in that area the effect will be that not only will you have that virtue - not only will you be able to do those good things that you wish you could do, but it will be your joy that will drive you to do them. That is the effect of grace. According to 2 Cor.9:14 grace is what makes your life attractive to the saints.

**2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.**

Grace is some pretty marvelous stuff isn't it? But it is important to understand that it is not stuff. Grace is not some substance that comes from God. Grace is a word that describes what God is like - and how He acts toward His children. Grace is the effect that comes from being the presence of God. God is so good and so wonderful and so marvelous, that when you are simply in His presence - all these things described above are what result. That is how good God is. Just sit back for a minute and enjoy being a child of a God like that - a God who is so good that His very *presence* is grace!

And that's not all. Grace also has a strengthening effect. According to 1 Cor.3:10 grace is the source of your skill. According to 1 Cor.15:10 grace is what motivates you; It is what makes you able to decide to get moving. Grace enables you to accomplish great things. According to Acts 6:8 it was grace that enabled Stephen to perform great wonders and signs. Grace is what enables you to be bold (Ro.15:15). In 2 Cor.12 Paul had a terrible thorn in his side that he wanted to be rid of because it was such a weakness. And instead of taking it away God said, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.**" (v.9) In other words, "What you need is not to be rid of your weakness; what you need is grace."

So it is through God's grace that you are saved, and strengthened and nourished and sustained and guided and helped and empowered and made more godly and filled with joy. It is through God's grace that you are motivated and encouraged and provided for and enriched.

There is nothing greater that you could ever wish for than grace - it is the best thing there is. Nothing would profit you more. There is nothing you would enjoy more. There is nothing that would satisfy you more.

Now, back to 1 Pe.4:10. Now that you understand what grace is, this verse should just about make

you fall out of your chair. Through your spiritual gift, God has made you a steward of what? His grace! Your gift is not just that thing you do best. Your gift is a pipeline from heaven that carries God's grace. God has given every Christian a fire hose of grace.

That means when you are using your gift, something astonishing is happening – and I mean astonishing with a capital A. All that I just described in talking about grace – all that is being dispensed to people through you.

## **Calling**

I would guess that there are probably more Christians searching to discover their calling than there are Christians who know what their calling is. I don't think that was God's intention. Why would God call us to do something and then communicate in such a vague, unclear way that we couldn't discover what it was? God is the best communicator in the Universe, and if He wants you to know something He is not going to make it impossible for you to hear what He is saying.

**Isa.45:19 I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness.**

So why do so many people have so much trouble finding their calling? I think one reason is they have been deceived by an assumption that it is OK for you to do nothing until you find out what your calling is. There is never a time when it is OK for you to be doing nothing. God's calling on your life is not patchy. He does not call you for 6 months, then have you go inactive for 3 years, then call you to something else.

In the book of Ephesians when Paul talks about his specific calling or our calling, the term he uses to describe it is "a grace."

**Eph.4:7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.**

If there were periods in your life when you had no calling, that verse would not be true. When Paul says that to each one of us a grace, or a specific calling to a specific ministry, has been given as Christ apportioned it, that applies to all Christians every day. No one can stand before God today, on Feb.11, 2007, and say, "I am justified in doing nothing in the church because I have not been called to do anything at this time in my life."

So if you understand that – that the Lord expects you to always be doing something, that really simplifies matters because if you know for certain that you are supposed to be doing *something*, then all you have to do is look at all the available ministries and determine which one fits you the best. And if there is only one opportunity available, then you know with 100% certainty what your calling is. Because if you're trying to decide *which one in this list fits me best?* and there is only one item in the list, it's pretty easy.

If you join this church and want to find which ministry opportunity fits you best, one place to start is on our website. If you go to [TreasuringGod.com](http://TreasuringGod.com) and look under "community" on the "serve" page you can see some of the ministry opportunities that are available. It is taking us a long time to get the ministry descriptions up on that page, so just keep checking back.

And if you absolutely can not find any ministry that you can do, just look around and find someone who is doing a worthwhile ministry and support that person. Just walk up to that person and say, "What can I do to help you?" A lot of times God calls people to tasks that are a lot bigger than what they can do alone, and they need a group of people to support them. And those people are usually so busy with the massive task they've been given they don't have time to recruit anyone to help them.

## **2. Unity of Purpose**

There can't just be diversity of parts; there has to be unity of purpose in the overall effort of the body. When some body part is doing something that is not part of a coordinated effort with the rest of the body parts there is a word for that. It is called a spasm. It accomplishes nothing.

This is a real problem in our culture. We live in a very individualistic culture – we are not big into community. Our country worships at the shrine of privacy, and in many ways even as Christians we are a product of our culture. We love to just operate our own little world, and involve other people when we

feel the need, but it is very hard for us to break out of our individualistic mentality and embrace the corporate mentality that Scripture presents.

There are a lot of Christians who are off in their own little corner, with no real, vital connection with the body, doing their own little ministry in their own little private world. That is not God's design. I am not saying every ministry you do has to be some official function of the church. What I'm talking about is much bigger than that. The point is not so much that each ministry activity be part of the church; the point is that your *life* should be part of the church.

You are a body part. Your whole existence has meaning only in its relationship to the church. Each part of your physical body draws all its life from the body and pours all of its effort into serving the body. That's what a body part does. If you are not so intricately woven into the rest of the body so that you draw your very life from Christ through His body, and all your efforts are achieving the great, massive, cosmic purposes of Christ that He is carrying out through His body; then you are either not a part of the body at all or you are a body part that is becoming detached and will soon wither away and die.

### 3. Interdependence in function

Throughout the passage Paul emphasizes the need each part has for the other parts. Take just one body part – like the knee. If my knee does a fabulous job – it bends perfectly, holds up under a load – does everything a knee should do, so that it is the best knee-work being done anywhere in the country; if it is not done in coordination with the rest of the body parts it is worthless. If it is not connected to the rest of the leg, what good will it be?

Is your life that dependent? Would your ministry completely collapse if the rest of the body withdrew? Or are you operating independently of the body?

21<sup>st</sup> Century American culture thinks independence is a great thing. And in some ways it is. But for a part of a body it is an evil thing. Joshua Harris says, "Lone rangers are dead rangers." That's true. If you take out your liver and set it out on the table, it will die (and so will you). But more importantly, even if it could be kept alive somehow, it couldn't possibly fulfill its function, because its only function is a function that works in conjunction with the rest of the parts of the body. Outside the Church you cannot possibly fulfill your purpose for existing, because you are a part of a body.

So if you are a shin bone, don't spend all your energy just being the best shin bone in the world; ask yourself, "How is my connection to the ankle and knee? How am I doing with the virtue of interdependence?" (And if you have trouble thinking of dependence as a virtue than you need to reread your Bible – especially 1 Cor.12 and Eph.4.)

Dependence is a beautiful thing in a body – it is a sign of health and strength. But if you have a part of your body that is independent of the rest of your body, you need to get to an emergency room *fast*.

Have you ever spent any time thinking about what you can do to improve your interdependence? We work hard at developing our gifts and improving our ministries (which is a very good thing to do - Paul told Timothy to fan in to flame his gift – we need to work hard at improving in our role). But have you ever worked hard at improving your connections to the body? Have you ever asked, "What can I do to grow some ligaments and tendons so not only will I be a strong shin bone, but I'll have a strong connection to the knee and ankle"?

**Eph.4:16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**

The two terms, **joined** and **held together** speak of being fitting together and relating harmoniously together. The word "**supporting**" is literally "supply" or "provision." And the word translated **ligament** is not a precise medical term. It is simply a term that applies to all kinds of connective tissue – including ligaments, tendons and joints, as well as nerves and veins and arteries. And so the ideas of connecting and supplying are both present.

The only way a body can grow is if every part of the body is supplied with oxygen and nutrition. That is what your arteries do. With every breath you take, and every beat of your heart nutrition and oxygen are carried throughout the body to supply each of the 75 trillion cells in the body. And when they receive that nutrition and oxygen, they grow and carry out their function.

So how can you and I improve in this important area of interdependence? We need to think of our existence and purpose in terms of functioning like an artery to the people seated around us. It is easy to press this analogy because Scripture compares the Holy Spirit to air, and Jesus Christ said He is like bread. Your ministry – whatever it is – serves the function of taking that oxygen and nutrition (in other words grace), and delivering it to the rest of the body. You need to be taking advantage of every opportunity to do whatever you can to get the grace of God delivered to the parts of the body and to receive grace from God from other parts of the body.

I'm afraid a lot of churches are weak and dying because of dislocated limbs and clogged arteries. At the risk of getting carried away with the illustration I think there are a lot of people sitting in churches whose only role in the body is to serve as cholesterol. They don't do anything but clog the arteries. They clog up the flow of grace to the parts of the body.

If you walk in here on Sunday morning, sit down in the pew and watch, stand up and walk out, and that's the some total of your involvement until next Sunday; you are both a clogged artery and a dislocated limb.

There are cells and organs in this body, and you lie between them and the heart and lungs. They are in desperate need of oxygen and nutrition that can only get to them through you. But they are withering away and dying because the flow of grace is being blockaded by the fact that your ministry is not being done. Maybe because you have not connected well enough with them, or maybe because you have not connected well enough with the parts of the body who are supposed to supply you. You need people teaching you, discipline you, encouraging you, strengthening you. You need a constant flow of grace into your life from other body parts and you need to have a constant flow of grace from you into other body parts.

And always remember: the source of grace is God and His Word. So no matter what people need – strengthening, encouragement, endurance, hope, joy - whatever form of grace they need, it will come to them when you do two things:

- 1) Pray for them – like Paul, constantly praying that God would grant them more and more grace.
- 2) Be an artery that supplies their heart with the truth of God's Word.

Part of that is teaching them yourself. Saturate your own heart with the truth of Scripture so the Word of Christ dwells in you richly, and when you are in a conversation with someone and he says, "I'm at my wit's end because my boss at work is driving me crazy" you can respond with some encouragement from God's Word that will give him the grace he needs.

And the other part of that is to help support the infrastructure that will bring the preaching of God's Word to that person. So when you do some ministry – whether it is helping with the website, or duplicating sermon CDs, or working in the nursery, or serving on a committee, or setting up signs to help people find this place, your motive in all of it is to enable the functioning of the church so that the Word of God can be delivered to the body.

I think this is a good thing to think about when we are tempted to pass judgment on each other. There are people who will stand in judgment on the Church and point the finger at some sick, dying organ and say, "Look at that pathetic part of the body. It is not functioning as it should be, and that offends me, and so I'm going to stand back and remove myself from ministry!" And they fail to realize that yes, it is true that that part of the body is rotting and putrefying and is offensive, but maybe it is that way because I failed to supply them with grace from God.

That phrase in Eph.4:16 **as each part does its work** literally means "according to work in measure." And that phrase carries the idea of proportion. So the meaning of the sentence is that the supplying and connecting function of the connective tissue works, only in *proportion* to the working of each individual part. If the individual part fails, God will not override that. God will not allow the body to grow except in proportion to the functioning of the various connective parts.

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So those are the three things Paul emphasizes in this passage: diversity of parts, unity of purpose, and interdependence in function. He makes the same three points in a more condensed form in Ro.12.

**Ro.12:4-5 just as we have many parts in one body (unity of purpose – one body), and all the parts do not have the same function (diversity of parts),<sup>5</sup> in the same way we who are many are one body in**



**Christ and individually members of one another<sup>2</sup>** (interdependence in function).

Thinking of yourself as a body part should be simultaneously humbling and ennobling. On the one hand it is a very honoring thing. Think of how important all the parts of the body are. It would be a tough day for you if you went to the doctor tomorrow and he told you that you're going to lose a limb. Each body part is extremely important. So being told that you are a body part of Christ is a very honoring, ennobling thing.

But at the same time it is humbling. Think of how miniscule the contribution of one body part is compared to what it receives from all the other parts. According to the Lever 2000 commercial there are 2000 body parts on a person. I'm not sure of the scientific accuracy of that number, but I do know that there are a lot of parts, which means the contribution one part makes to the body is hugely outnumbered by the contributions all the rest of the body makes to that part.

In the last lesson I urged you to be devoted to carrying out the one another commands. That is half of what we need to reach maturity as a body. The other half is for each of us to carry out our own, specific calling and to utilize our gifts.

## Conclusion

We saw earlier that grace is not earned or deserved, but that is not to say that you just sit around and wait for it to come. Acts 18:27 says that God's grace enables us to believe in the first place, but then according to Ro.5:2 it is our responsibility to utilize that faith in order to gain access to still more grace.

We have a great deal of responsibility with regard to grace. God has commanded that we not fall short of it (Heb.12:15), not receive it in vain (2 Cor.6:1) but to hold on to it (Heb.12:28) and continue in it (Acts 13:43). We are called to be strong in it (2 Tim.2:1), to grow in it (2 Pe.3:18), and to find more of it by approaching the throne of grace with boldness (Heb.4:16) and to be good stewards of it (1 Pe.4:10). Seek hard after God's grace.

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<sup>2</sup> The word translated "members" is the word for body parts. So the end of v.5 says that we are individually body parts of one another. That means you, as an individual, are a body part of that person sitting near you. You are one of that person's body parts. And that person is one of your body parts. So if I am a hand, I am not just a hand for the whole body, I am also a hand for you as an individual. And you are an eye for me. We are not to just think in terms of helping the institution. He wants you to do that, but he also wants you to serve individual people as though you were one of those person's body parts.