

# The Beauty of Unified Diversity

## Part 2

1 Corinthians 12:14-26

**BI: When the diverse parts of the body work together in unity it magnifies the glory of the One who gave it life.**

If someone were to ask you to explain to them in simple and efficient terms what Calvary Bible Church is all about, what would you say? I hope you would say something like, Calvary Bible Church is passionate about proclaiming the excellencies of Jesus Christ. And the primary means by which we do that is through making disciples of Jesus Christ. We just think that the best way we can announce to the world that Christ is glorious is by helping hundreds of people come to know him, and learn to live like Him.

Someone might ask, How do you do that? To which we would answer, It takes an entire church to do that. To help a person become a disciple of Jesus Christ we need a few people to teach him. We also need lots of people love him, serve him, encourage him, exhort him, worship and pray with him, make sure his personal and financial needs are met, and model for him by how they live and what they say and how they dress... what it means to be a follower, a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Making disciples is a full church ministry. God has so designed the discipleship process that no single person can adequately turn another person into a mature follower of Christ. A new believer needs the ministry and spiritual giftings of all the other members of the church to help him change and grow into Christ's likeness. Each member of the body must do his/her part in helping the other members grow. And when that happens over long periods of time in the local church, ministry is powerful, effective, and fruitful to the glory of God and the Joy of His people.

Nevertheless, it is possible to sabotage this God-ordained means of making disciples. And that is what Paul is writing about here in 1 Corinthians 12. The brothers in Corinth were sabotaging God's plan for discipleship by their constant, self-consumed bickering, self-exaltation, toleration of immorality, and general divisiveness. The whole point of this letter is to bring them to the kind of personal and corporate repentance that would produce genuine unity in the church. So let's take a moment to refresh on this text and be reminded of what we started last week.

### **Read 1 Cor. 12:14-26**

We learned last time that in this text Paul is trying to correct two opposite perspective relative to how one views himself in relationship to the other members of the local church. Both of these views were apparently present in the church of Corinth and were rendering the church useless in ministry both to the body and to the world in which they lived. On the one hand, there were some who looked around at the other members of the church and said, "They don't need me." On the other hand there were also members of the church who looked around at all the others and said,

“I don’t need them.” The first group underestimates their importance to the local church, and the second group overestimates their own importance in the church.

These are the two issues in this text that God wants us to wrestle with, and indeed we spent out entire time last week thinking about the first of these groups. Let’s refresh on that for just a moment.

Paul’s exhortation to the first group sounded something like this:

## **I. Never Underestimate Your Own Importance to the Church:**

1. As we saw last time, there were some in the body (as perhaps there is in our church as well), who never get around to doing anything for the church on a consistent basis because they just think that they have nothing to offer. But this kind of thinking is misguided for at least two reasons.

A. First, this view completely missed the point of Paul referring to the church as a “body”. The word “body” means “a collective group.” In other words, you can’t have a body if there are no individual parts.

Notice Paul says in v.14 , “If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?” Then v. 19, “If they were all one member, where would the body be?” You see, there is no such thing as a body if there are not many individual parts doing what they were created to do. The body cannot survive without many different parts working

together to keep it healthy and sustain its life. Paul is saying that what’s true of the human body is true of the church body. So no part of the body can legitimately say, “They don’t need me.”

B. Second, the thinking of the first group was misguided because they forgot that every person in the church is there by God’s sovereign design. Those who are dissatisfied with their gifts need to remember that God had a specific purpose in mind when He gave you that gift. Verse eighteen (18) reads, “*But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.*” Then again, verse 24 says that “God has composed the body...”.

2. This tells us that each of us has a specific purpose in the body that God wants us to fulfill. But when someone holds himself aloof from the body and says, “They don’t need me” it causes harm to the body of Christ. That fact is, we do need you! We cannot function properly without you!

3. So to the first group Paul says, “Never underestimate your importance in the church. But there was another group in the church who also needed a bit of correction. To them Paul had to say...

## **II. Never Overestimate Your Own Importance to the Church:**

1. Beloved, let's be honest about this. Americans pride themselves on rugged individualism. And while that may be great if you're acting in an old John Wayne movie, or building a log cabin in frozen tundra of Alaska, if you're in the church that's a lousy attitude.

2. If the first group said "The church doesn't need me," these people were saying "I don't need them." Their problem was an attitude of **superiority** rather than **inferiority**. They were proud and thought they could do the Christian life and run the church all by themselves.

3. Notice what Paul says (Read 21-22)

4. You see, in the human body there are major parts that are prominent and important but which are *NOT* necessary. For example, my feet and my arms are important, but I can go on living without them. Because they are prominent they seem overly important. On the other hand, however, there are members of the human body that are concealed and hidden, nobody sees them. But if they stop working you're a dead duck.

5. The lungs are never seen, and what do they do? All they do is push air! The heart is never seen, and what does it do? All it does is pump blood! But that doesn't mean its not necessary. (Read v. 23-24)

6. Perhaps you don't notice your heart or your lungs, but you better pay attention to them. You better take care of them. Why? Because they're really important. In fact, you need to remember that if you are an arm or a hand, you're not nearly as necessary as these other members of the body. The body can live on well enough without you. But if the heart and lungs quit doing their job, you're dead.

7. Listen, in every church there are men and women who are very gifted mentally and intellectually. They know the Bible. They can strategize about future ministry, and all that stuff, and sometimes they come across as very self-important. They believe their will for the church is God's will for the church. And they are a little taken back when the leadership doesn't go along with it.

8. On the other hand, there are in every church a few little ladies who are rarely ever seen or heard from who spend hours every week praying for the people needs and ministries needs of the church. I think what Paul is saying, "Give me 100 of these faithful, invisible senior saints for every 1 self-important, multi-gifted person in the body any day of the week. I think when we get to heaven we will discover that these invisible saints - who never in their lives set foot on the platform of the church - will be honored by Christ as the ones whose effectual prayers and faithful service accomplished more for the church body than all of the proud, multi-gifted saints did combined.

9. In fact, as we will see in chapter 13, it is possible to engage in radical, cutting-edge ministry and yet be accounted as NOTHING by God because your actions were not rooted and saturated with love for God and love for people. But I'll hold on to that message for a couple more weeks.

10. So what should the more prominent members do for the hidden, invisible members of the church? We should go out of our way to give them honor. The people up front need to honor those who serve behind the scenes. Those who serve in the nursery are just as necessary as those who serve on the praise team and those who preach and teach.

11. The analogy Paul is using is that of the human body. And he is saying that there are member of the human body (like the face and the hands) which are prominent and tend to receive honor by default. On the other hand, there are parts of our body that we cover because they are "less honorable." But how to do we cover those parts? We dress them up in expensive clothes and jewelry. (Read v. 23-24)

12. Paul is saying, this is how it should be in the body of Christ as well. Those who seem especially gifted and are elevated to positions of authority and influence should not be concerned about their own reputation. Rather, they should be deflecting honor to the people behind the scenes who are being faithful to the church in ways that are often invisible to most of the body. In other words, they should not think of themselves so highly. They should not think of their own opinions as though they were from God. Rather, they should use their God-given position in the church to encourage, serve, and love people.

13. Why should this be their attitude? Read v. 25-26 *"So that there may be no division in the body, but the members should have the same care for one another."*

14. The point is, beloved, we need each other. The workers nobody sees *need* those who have a more public ministry. And those who serve up front *need* those who are behind the scenes. As Paul told the believers in Ephesus, we are all to "grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of *each individual part*, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

15. There is no place in the body of Christ for "Lone Ranger" self-important Christians. John Wesley was right when he said, "There is no such thing as a solitary Christian."

16. In most churches, some feel that they have no gifts or abilities, so they sit back and let others do all the work. Others feel they are so highly qualified that they don't need the help of others to fulfill their ministry and frankly, the other people just get in their way (which accounts for their frequent frustration, displeasure, and occasional anger). Both of these cases are people who are focused on self and who are little use to the body no matter how gifted they may be.

17. God honors and blesses all the members of the body who function according to His design; who faithfully serve the other members of the body. And He expects us to do the same.

18. God created the church to bring glory to Christ by the way we live, love and serve together. Never allow yourself to underestimate your importance to the body of Christ. On the other hand, we should never allow ourselves to overestimate our importance in the body of Christ. Rather, we should view ourselves with all humility and do what we can to help everyone else in the body grow and change into the image of Christ.

**BI: When the diverse parts of the body work together in unity, it magnifies the glory of the One who gave it life.**

### **Key Scriptures:**

**Proverbs 8:13** "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate."

**Proverbs 11:2** "When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom."

**Proverbs 16:5** "Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished."

**Proverbs 16:18-19** "Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling. 19 It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly Than to divide the spoil with the proud".

**Proverbs 29:23** "A man's pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor."

**Proverbs 21:24** "Proud," "Haughty," "Scoffer," are his names, Who acts with insolent pride.

**Isaiah 2:12** "For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning Against everyone who is proud and lofty And against everyone who is lifted up, That he may be abased."

**Isaiah 2:22** "Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; For why should he be esteemed?"

**Daniel 4:37** "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."

**Habakkuk 2:4** "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.

**Matthew 11:29** "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS."

V. 26

**Consider:** look at, "you can see what I mean," take care, **Think about it.**

**Calling:** Paul always used the term *calling* to refer to the saving call of God, the effectual call resulting in redemption. God didn't call you because you were wealthy or brilliant or powerful.

**Not many:** a relative lack of worldly esteem

**Wise:** clever

**According to the flesh:** as the world perceives it

**According to:** according to the standard of. It speaks of wisdom gained according to the flesh; that is, according to natural and human abilities.

**Mighty:** (δυνατοσ) powerful, influential,

**Noble:** (ευγενής) high status, well-born. The social structure of the church at Corinth included those from all levels of society. There were those from the lower levels of society as well as some from the upper levels.

V.27

**Chosen:** to pick out, to select, **to choose for one's self.** To beat down the pride and vanity of men. **God has taken to Himself from the midst of the world those individuals whom no one judged worthy of attention.**

**Shame:** to put to shame, dishonor (1 Cor. 11:4,5,22), disgrace (1 Cor. 11:22),

V.28

**Base:** not of noble birth, low, insignificant

**Despised:** to consider as nothing. The perf. indicates not only quality but also indicates that which was once despised will continue to be despised.

**Things which are not:** "the nothings," things which do not exist. *A more contemptible expression in Greek thinking was not possible. Being was everything.* In Roman society one's value was determined by education, wealth and breeding. The cross, on the other hand, turns the world upside down.

**Nullify:** to put out of action, to make inactive. An action unfavorable to its object

V.29

**So that:** used to express intended negative results.

**No one:** no flesh, no one, no man.

**Boast:** to glory, **self promotion.** No one can promote himself before God. "The Corinthians lived and an honor/shame culture. It was a culture where public recognition was often more important than fact, and where the worst thing that could happen was for one's reputation to be publicly tarnished. In such a culture a personal sense of worth is based on recognition by others of one's accomplishments, hence the self-promoting" (NIGCT p. 187).

V.30

**By His doing:** your status in Christ is a gift. Lit: "It is as a gift from him that you are in Christ Jesus." from Him, that is, you are born of Him in Christ Jesus. Therefore there is no room for boasting about some level of status you have achieved in the world. You all have a common source of salvation

**You:** second person, plural "Yall". You all have a common source of salvation. In the presence of God (in Christ) there is no place for self-glory, self-esteem, priding oneself.

**Wisdom:** (σοφία), Christ is the true wisdom (the New Wisdom of the cross) and union with Him makes the believer truly wise. (Instant: Jn. 8:31-32; 2 Cor. 4:6; Progressive: Eph. 1:17,18; 2 Pet. 3:18 ).

**To us:** for us

**Righteousness:** (δικαιοσύνη) the status of being in the right (or consider righteous) before God. (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). The word occurs only here in the epistle, but the cognate verb δικαιοῶ also occurs in 1 cor. 4:4 and 6:11. We are now clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

**Sanctification:** (αγιασμος) set apart as holy to God. In Christ we are set apart.

**Redemption:** purchased by God to be His own. Transfer from a position of no account to one of dignity and freedom (as a son of God). “The metaphor primarily refers to the purchase *from* one owner *to* another, by means of a costly transaction” (NIGCT p. 194). Release through the payment of a ransom price. To buy back (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Perhaps here pointing to the last great day, the consummation of redemption. *The last three terms are an explanation of the word “wisdom”, the Word of the Cross.*

V.31

**So that:** in order that it might come to pass, or work out just as.

**Boast:** take pride in ones self, glorieth (KJV). (cf. gal. 6:14). Since our new status is a give of God in Christ, our grounds for glory lay exclusively “in the Lord.” cf. **Jeremiah 9:22** “*Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom...etc*”

## Key Terms

### Exegetical Outline

1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 12:14-

14
