

*The Church which is His Body*  
*1 Corinthians 12:14-27*

INTRO:

*“The church is an organism, not just an organization.”* A Christian Education professor, that I had at Moody Bible Institute, said this over and over again to us in class. The local church is the functioning body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul wanted the Corinthians to recognize what an incredible thing the church is, and that it is not the political organization they thought it was. There is unity and diversity in the body of Christ.

*I. The Inferior Gifts Speaking to the Superior Gifts (v. 14-19)*

*II. The Superior Gifts Speaking to Those They See as Inferior (v. 20-27)*

*I. The Inferior Gifts Speaking to the Superior Gifts (v. 14-19)*

A. In verse 14, Paul wrote,

***“For in fact the body is not one member but many.”***

It is almost as if Paul is saying, just look at your body, and understand this. The body is not all made of the same element. It has many members.

B. Using the object lesson of the body, Paul immediately begins to address the problem in the Corinthian church.

**vs.15-16** *“If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body?”*

In this illustration, a part of the body that thinks itself inferior in function addressed another member it thought was more important to the function of the body.

1. Paul wrote, suppose a foot was to say to the hand, because I am not a hand I am not a part of the body. Would it cease to be part of the body? No. How about if one of the ears says a similar thing to the eye, would it be not a part of the body?

2. It appears that some within the Corinthian church had the idea that if they did not have a specific gift, a showy gift, they were not an important part of the body. In fact, they thought that if they did not have this particular gift, they might not belong to the body at all. For example, some today might be led to think, *“If I don’t speak in tongues, maybe I am not really a part of what God is doing in His church.”*

C. This thinking was all wrong in Corinth and it is all wrong today. Paul shows it is all wrong by making three points.

**v.17-19** *“If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?”*

1. First, this thinking is wrong because if it were true the body would be unable to function. Do you see the grotesque image Paul draws? A body made up of just eyes could not hear and would starve to death. This is Paul's point. Every gift is important to the function of the body -- even the non-showy ones.

2. Second, this thinking is erroneous because God, the one who never made a mistake, designed the body and put each of us and our gifts in it where He wanted us to be.

**v.18** *“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.”*

God, Himself, chose to put each of us in the body to operate as He has chosen us to function.

3. Third, Paul wrote, if the body were all one member, you name it, eyes, noses, toes, or ear, whatever, what would happen to the body? It would soon cease to exist. The issue in this paragraph we cannot say, *“I am not needed in the body.”*

## ***II. The Superior Gifts Speaking to Those They See as Inferior (v. 20-27)***

A. The problem in Corinth wasn't just that some folks with the not so showy gifts felt they weren't appreciated or valuable to the body. Those who claimed they possessed the showy gifts thought they didn't need the folks with the less showy gifts. At **verse 20**, the Apostle Paul turned the coin over and addressed the problem from other side.

**vs.20-21** *“But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’”*

The eye can't say to the hand, *“Go away! I don't need you.”* Nor can the head say to the feet, *“Take a hike, I don't want you around anymore.”*

B. You can almost hear those folks in Corinth saying, *“Why not, Paul? If they were really necessary God would give them the gift of prophecy or tongues.”* That can't happen because of some very important realities.

1. First, we need the seemingly inferior appearing members in order to live.

**vs.22-23** *“No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty.”*

In fact, these members are not inferior, they are just as necessary as the visible members if the body are to live and function. They aren't inferior. They are indispensable.

2. Second, think about how we treat our physical bodies. The parts of our bodies that aren't that attractive, we clothe to make them more attractive.

**vs.23-25** *“And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, but our representable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, in order that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.”*

God does this in the church. If you have a less showy gift, God showers more honor upon you than on the showy gifts! God knows you are there being faithful in your service every week even if no one else notices! And He is the One who counts!

3. Third, we are all connected.

**v.26** *“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. If one member hurts we all hurt.”*

When one member rejoices we all rejoice. This is not hard to understand. Just break your little toe. While you may go your whole life not thinking about your little toe, break it once and all of your body will know it. We cannot say because we have a mundane gift, *“I am not needed.”* We also cannot say to another member of the body, *“You are not needed.”*

C. Listen to what Paul said in **verse 27**;

***“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”***

Paul says, *“I'm not talking about your body. I am talking about the church there in Corinth!”*

Having seen Paul's application to the church at Corinth, let's try to apply this to us here at Calvary Baptist Church.

1. First, every believer with their particular gift is important to the body. There are many folks today who take the attitude of the first group that Paul talked to. *“If I can't have a showy and important role in the church, I am not going to do anything.”* Or, some might say, *“I can't sing, I can't teach, I can't do anything so I must not be needed in the ministry.”* That is not true. You can serve. You can encourage. You can pray. We need

elbows as much as we need mouths. We need feet as much as we need hands. Please don't sit out of the ministry because you do not have a showy gift!

2. Second, because some sit out of the ministry other members of the body have to compensate. We have hands trying to be hands and feet at the same time. As a result we walk funny. Do you know what happens when we try to do that? There was a pitcher named Dizzy Dean, he was unhittable, until one day he hurt his knee. Because he refused to let the knee heal, he blew out his wonderful arm and never became the pitcher he could have been. The body can be ineffective and actually damaged because some gifted people refuse to do their part.

3. Finally, if we are faithfully functioning in our place in the body, we can be sure that even if no one else notices, God does and He will reward us for it!

**1 Corinthians 15:58**      ***"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."***

**Hymn #277 The Church's One Foundation**