

Turn over to **1 Corinthians 12**. In this chapter we see a lot of information about the body of Christ, the Church. Let's look at **verses 12-14**. In these verses we see that just like a human body has different parts like arms, hands, fingers, and nails, they all make up one body. These individual members are the physical makeup of our bodies. What Paul tells us is this is the same with Christ. The Church is one body that is made up of individual members where Christ is the head. If you get nothing else out of this sermon, I want you without a doubt to know what **verse 14** says. The body of Christ is not one member. But it is many members.

This is a concept of being in a one-relationship with the authority. We can see this concept in **Romans 12:4-5**. We are to be one in each other and one in Christ. I believe that in order for us to be one in each other and to be one in Christ - a transformation has to occur. A metamorphosis, if you will. We can see that in **Romans 12:1-2**, we are to be transformed. The essence of the Christian life is daily sacrifice which results in holy living which brings glory to God. This is a transformed life. I've used this in many of my sermons, but the question still remains: How do I transform myself? Because it is through this transformation that we are in the one body of Christ. I believe that we can learn how to do this in the example of the head of the body, which is Jesus, and in the rest of **Romans 12**, this is where we will spend our time this evening.

1. "let us use...our gifts"

- a. Let's start with the example of Jesus. If we want to be one in Christ we should seek to be Christ-like. Jesus had about every gift you could think of: Jesus had the ability to perform miracles and he used that gift so that people would believe in him, Jesus had the ability to teach and he used that gift to explain that he was the fulfillment of prophecy and to teach of the kingdom, Jesus could do anything with his gifts but one example I want to mention is in **Matthew 15:30-32**, in most of these miracles Jesus performs, it is because he has compassion for the people. Jesus had this amazing gift of compassion and love and it is through this gift that the gift of his miracles came out and his teachings would be believed.
- b. So bringing this concept to us, **Romans 12:6-8**. Not all of us are great at making people feel welcome or leading singing or giving short talks. But each and every one of us has a gift given to us that we can use for the service of the body of Christ. Paul gives examples of prophesying, teaching, giving, and leading. Not all of us are able to do all of these things. Paul makes it clear in **verse 6** that our gifts differ from others and fill the gaps. Some of us may think we aren't good at any of these things.
- c. But there is a spot for you. You know you can be an incredible encouragement just by showing up? You encourage me every time I hear those Bible pages turning. There's a young man here who I don't know if he can hear how off he is when we sing but he is singing with his whole heart and I'll take that over a professional choir any day. We can have major effects on each other and we may not know it. Go back to **1 Corinthians 12:22-23**. In this comparison to the human body, there may be parts of our body that we think are weaker or those that we don't think are as good as another, but they are necessary! The point Paul is making is that even those who may think they are weaker or those who may think they're not as good as another member – you are necessary. You are so important to the work of the body. So let's use our gifts even if we may think they're not important.

2. "abhor evil...cling to good"

- a. Again, let's begin with Jesus. We want to be transformed to be in the body of Christ and the example of Jesus clinging to what is good is when he is tempted by the devil in **Matthew 4**. We see every time satan tempts him Jesus responds with three words – "it is written" – Jesus was clinging to the word of God to not only abhor evil but to resist it, and by doing so Jesus was successful.
- b. Now let's look at **Romans 12:9**, it says to abhor evil and cling to what is good. As the body of Christ how can we truly be one, how can we truly use our gifts in a way that would please God, if we are doing the opposite of this verse? If we are clinging to evil. How can we truly present ourselves as a living sacrifice as mentioned in the first two verses of this chapter? Well we can't. It just doesn't fit. If we rather abhor evil, give it no place in us, and hold on tight, cling to good as if we were hanging off a mountain for our lives like Jesus did, then we will be truly one and we will truly use our gifts in a way that would please our God.
- c. I'll say this, we may even find that we have more gifts than we thought. If we cling to good and strive to use our gifts then it may open the door for the goodness we are clinging to, to show in us. That goodness could reveal itself in teaching, or leading, or being merciful. Look at **1 Corinthians 12:29-31**. We see in these verses a bunch of rhetorical questions. Of course not everyone is an apostle or a prophet or teacher; But we see the actions of those who cling to what is good in **verse 21**. Those who cling to good are going to earnestly desire those gifts and maybe

by clinging to good gifts that we don't realize we have will be revealed in us. So let's hold on to, let's cling to what is good.

3. "be devoted to one another"

- a. Let's talk about Jesus' devotion to the Church. Let's look at **John 3:16-17**. You want to talk about devotion to the people of God? Talk about this. Jesus gave his life, his perfect, sinless life so that others may be forgiven and so that others have a hope of Heaven. There is no greater showing of love and devotion in the entire history of man. Jesus showed absolute compassion in that he died for his people.
- b. Next we have **Romans 12:10-13**. We are told to be devoted or kindly affectionate to one another and to give preference or put each other first. In these verses there are so many specifics that are given such as being fervent in spirit and patient in tribulation, serving one another, but when you boil right down to it, all of these specifics are fulfilled when we do the first two ideas we talked about tonight. If we are using the gifts that God has given us and if we hate evil and keep it away from us and if we will cling to what is good, then what is good is to look out for the well-being of others over ourselves, just like Jesus did!
- c. I hope you're seeing the recurring theme that each of these build on the one previous. But it's not only just looking out for the well-being of each other but it is placing emphasis on looking out for the spiritual well-being of each other. Notice serving the lord, hope, tribulation, and steadfast prayer. So yes the physical well-being is important to look out for, but it is the spiritual well-being of others that we are to be devoted to. Now let's look over at **1 Corinthians 12:25-26**. We ought to have the same care for one another. Being concerned about each other because we are all a part of each other! When one of us suffers we all suffer, when one of us rejoices, we all rejoice! That's such a beautiful picture that God has laid out for us so let's be devoted to one another!

4. "bless those who persecute you"

- a. **Matthew 5:43-47** Jesus commands to love those who wish evil on us and to bless our enemies but he doesn't just say it, Jesus practiced it. When Jesus was dying on the cross, what did Jesus say? In **Luke 23:34**, Jesus asks God to forgive them! Jesus uses his gift of compassion here too; he understands that those people don't know what they're doing! Jesus was blessing those who were killing him.
- b. So now how are we to do this? The next thing we see in **Romans 12:14-20**, we are to bless those who persecute us and we ought to not only look out for the well-being of God's people, but also those who are not God's people. Notice **verse 16**. It is so easy for us to think of ourselves higher than we ought to. We do have something to boast about but it is not of ourselves; we can boast in God because he is the only one who has ever done anything worthy to boast, but it's pretty easy to let our pride creep in, at least it is for me. But notice **verse 18**. Live peaceably with all men. ALL men. That includes everybody.
- c. When my pride gets in the way of me wishing good on people and trying my best to show love toward them, then I am in the wrong. I am viewing myself as the judge and am boasting in myself. But in **verse 19-20**, we see that God is the judge. God will have vengeance; it is not our place. So in **verse 20**, we ought to do good for our enemies and bless those who persecute us. By doing so we heap coals of fire on their head. Now we can't go back to **1 Corinthians 12** for this point. 1 Corinthians 12 is about those who are in the body; but we are talking about those who are outside the body. But we can go to **Jude 21-22**. We need to have compassion in hopes of saving souls because we hate the garment that has been defiled by the flesh. We can love our enemies and try to bring them to the truth, so let's bless those who persecute us.

Back in **1 Corinthians 12** we talked about how there is one body that is made up of individual members and we went to **Romans 12** to suggest that a transformation – a metamorphosis – has to take place so we can truly be one with each other and one with Christ. Just like metamorphosis with a butterfly there are stages that build on each other – these four stages build on each other and there is a really cool connection we can see between the two. When a butterfly comes into life it has to be born – when a person comes into Christ they must be born first too. In **1 Corinthians 12:13** – we must be baptized in water to be in the body – to be one in Christ.