Diversity and Unity of the Body

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[0:00] Hi, Ferb. For those of you who are visiting, my name is Sean.

I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church, and I have the privilege of preaching God's Word on most weeks, so I'm going to welcome you here. So we're at 1 Corinthians 12, because we skipped ahead to chapter 15, actually, last Sunday, because it was Resurrection Sunday.
We wanted to talk about the Resurrection of Christ, so we skipped ahead to 15. We're now back to chapter 12, because we left off at the end of 11 on Good Friday. So that's where we are, and it talks about the body of Christ and how we are a family of God interdependent on one another.
And as much as we in the United States here, we laud individualism and self-reliance, at the bottom of it, we all want friends. We all want to belong. And we all want to fit in and feel like we are valuable and that we're contributing members of groups that we're a part of.
And that's because we are social creatures. God created us to belong in community. And this is true of all of society, but especially so in the context of the church, which is the family of God constituted by the Spirit of God.
[1:21] And so Paul, in the preceding chapter in verse 11, he strongly condemned the divisions within the Corinthian church along socioeconomic lines. He condemned that in the passage when he was talking about the Lord's Supper.

And then here, Paul continues to address divisions that are wreaking havoc in the Corinthian church, this time along the issues of spiritual gifts. And so he begins in verse 1, by now concerning, and that's now the fourth time Paul's used that phrase in this letter.
And every time he indicates a new topic, he's introducing a new topic that the Corinthians themselves had written to Paul about in their letter, and now he's taking time to address it. They wanted to know about the spiritual gifts, and he's addressing it.
And his main point here is that the church is to be an interdependent body modeled after the triune God. That's the main point. The church is to be an interdependent body modeled after the triune God.
And he unpacks that in three parts. First, he talks about the Trinity, verses 1 to 11. Secondly, he talks about diversity in verses 12 to 20. And then lastly, he talks about unity in verses 21 to 31.
[2:30] But before he addresses these manifestations of the Spirit directly, Paul needs to deal with some preliminary concerns, theological issues, and that's why he has verses 1 to 3 here.

Read with me. Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says, Jesus is accursed. And no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit.
While the Corinthians are uninformed about the spiritual gifts, and they need Paul to help them to understand, they do know something, and Paul talks about that first. He says that they know their former experience with idolatry.
You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to mute idols. And by calling the idols mute, Paul is pointing out and exposing really the futility of idol worship. I mean, you crafted that with your own hands, and you expected to speak to you, and to answer your prayers, and to help you throughout your life.
[3:34] So he's exposing that futility by calling it a mute idol. But at the same time, he recognizes that even the idols, even though the idols themselves are nothing, they're not gods at all, that behind them lies demonic influence.

And Paul talked about that earlier in the chapters as well. So, and because of that, he acknowledges in verse 2 that they are led astray to mute idols, however you were led. Those two

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passive verbs, being led and being however direction, they convey the idea of that kind of ecstasy that pagan worshipers sometimes fall into.
They fall into some kind of trance, and they are led to and fro, however the demonic influences want to take them, and they utter things that they don't remember. That's what Paul is speaking to here.
But Paul contrasts that pagan experience with speaking in the Spirit of God in verse 3.
He says, Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says Jesus is accursed. And no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit.
It's not any kind of spiritual speech that makes someone spiritual. Even pagans have their own form of spiritual speech. A pagan oracle loses his agency and does not know what he is saying, but a Christian prophet is sober-minded and composed.
[4:54] And he knows exactly what he is saying. And what sets apart speaking in the Spirit of God is its distinctive Christian content. And Paul uses that, uses kind of two opposite religious extremes and professions to make the point.

On the one hand, one is truly speaking with the Spirit of God cannot say Jesus is accursed. And on the other hand, those who are truly speaking, or who are not speaking in the Spirit of God cannot say that Jesus is Lord.
And of course, Paul's not saying that, he's not just talking about the mere words, Jesus is Lord. Anybody can say that, right? Anybody can say Jesus is Lord. Even the person that's possessed by an evil spirit named Legion in Mark 5-7 calls out to Jesus as the Son of the Most High God.
So, of course, people who are not speaking in the Spirit of God can acknowledge Jesus is Lord, but they are not confessing that Jesus is their Lord. He's not professing Jesus is my Lord.
And no one can do that without being led by the Spirit of God. So someone without the Spirit of God might be able to pronounce the words, Jesus is Lord, but they can never profess the words in faith, Jesus is Lord.
[6:04] And Paul was basically trying to tell the Corinthians, teach them, because they were so enamored with these spiritual gifts, especially ecstatic utterances. He's telling them that the gift of tongues was their favorite go-to.

And he's trying to correct them and teach them that the Holy Spirit will never contradict the Son of God, the Word of God. The Spirit of God always accompanies and confirms the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why in John 16, 13-14, Jesus described the Spirit of God as not speaking on his own authority, but whatever he hears from the Father and the Son, he declares to us.
The job of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Son. And you see all three of the Trinity, the three persons of the Trinity here. We see God mentioned, that's a reference to God the Father. We see Lord mentioned, that's the Lord Jesus.
And we see the Spirit mentioned, that's the Holy Spirit. And the Trinity, they form the foundation of all the spiritual gifts that Paul is going to talk about. And he unpacks those two relationships between the Trinity and the gifts in verses 4-6.
[7:04] Read with me. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

By using this neat kind of parallel structure, he repeats the word varieties three times and repeats the word the same three times. He's making the point that the diversity and unity of the spiritual gifts is rooted in the diversity and unity of the triune God.
And the varieties of gifts and service and activities are overlapping kind of parallel categories. So they don't, I don't think they're intended to delineate three distinct categories that are separate.
And the reason for that is because those words are used flexibly throughout this passage itself. The word activities, for example, is used to refer to miracles, which is usually lumped with the category of gifts.
And then on one point, he says that the workings of miracles, activities of miracles is attributed to the Spirit. In another place, it's attributed to God the Father. So it's these, the point that Paul's trying to make is not that there's these three different types of things, gifts, services, and activities, and they each relate respectively to the three persons of the Trinity.
[8:18] That's not what he's trying to say. What he's trying to say is that all these different kinds of spiritual things are associated with the triune God. They're all activities of the same triune God.

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And that's why Paul summarizes it in this way in verse 7. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. All the gifts, service, and activities are manifestations of the Spirit.
The emphasis then is not on the gifts themselves, but in the fact that gifts are manifestations of the Spirit. We won't have any of the gifts unless the Spirit of God, the living God, is present.
Unless he is active in our midst, we will not see any of these gifts. And that's why it's often all these things, service gifts, activities, are spoken of in one large category of the gifts of the Spirit because they are manifestations of the Spirit.
And because of this, even though there are varieties of recipients of these gifts, they all serve the same purpose. They're given not merely for our personal benefit, but for the corporate benefit of the church.
[9:26] And that means, this is helpful for us, because that means when a Christian brother or sister possesses a gift that we do not have, it's no reason to be jealous, but reason to rejoice.

Because it has been given for our good. You guys follow what I'm saying? The gifts are given individually to each believer, but they are given for the benefit of the whole church.
A spiritual gift that is given to one of us is given for all of us. And that's why we could embrace everyone's gifts and rejoice in it and use those gifts and encourage those gifts in one another.
And the church is supposed to be an interdependent body modeled after the triune God. Then in verses 8 to 10, Paul goes on to list some of the manifestations of the Spirit. But these are not intended to be exhaustive.
We know that because Paul produces similar lists in other parts. For example, Ephesians 4, Romans 12. But there are overlaps, but they're not exactly the same. There's also key differences.
[10:29] So this is not an exhaustive list, but rather it's a representative list of some of the gifts of the Spirit. Let me just explain them briefly as we go because some of you might not be familiar with what these gifts mean.

So first he writes, For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit. These two gifts mentioned here at the beginning are not mentioned anywhere else in all of Scripture.
So I think that that's a clue. The clue to their meaning has to lie in the context of 1 Corinthians because it's the only letter where it's mentioned. And thankfully, there's plenty of contextual clues throughout the letter.
The phrase utterance of wisdom is literally word of wisdom and phrase utterance of knowledge is literally word of knowledge. And if you know, if you've been with us throughout the series, you know that the words word, knowledge, and wisdom are all key words throughout 1 Corinthians.
They occur repeatedly and the Corinthians were known to be boasting in so-called words of wisdom, so-called knowledge, and lofty words and wisdom. This is what the Corinthians boasted in, prided themselves in.
[11:41] And Paul, in chapter 2, 6-7, he contrasted the wisdom of this age, which is doomed to pass away, he contrasted that wisdom from the secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

So this wisdom of God, Paul explains, is the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. So it's a reference to God's salvation plan which culminated in the person and work of Jesus.
It's the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what this wisdom is. So the utterance of wisdom then is best construed as the gift of teaching and communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that comes home to people with the Spirit's power and persuasiveness.
I think of someone like Billy Graham, right? He preached a very simple gospel message all his ministry, yet every time he preached the gospel, it was electric.
People respond because he came with the Spirit's power. That's the gift of the word of wisdom. As for the utterance of knowledge, the word of knowledge, in chapter 8, 1 to 13, Paul spoke of how the Corinthians used their so-called knowledge that there is no God but one, which is the truth, to justify participating in pagan feasts and thereby leading brothers and sisters with weaker consciences into sin.
[13:03] And so in that context, Paul was rebuking the Corinthians for misusing their partial knowledge. He called their knowledge knowledge that puffs up as in contrast with the love that builds up.

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And then similarly, later in chapter 13, he says this, As for prophecies, they will pass away. As for tongues, they will seize. As for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.
For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as high I have been fully known. So Paul's speaking about the fact that believers today, we have partial knowledge of God, but when Jesus returns, we will have full knowledge of God.
And so this knowledge seems to speak to, in both contexts that I mentioned, some kind of knowledge that has to do with God. Knowledge of God and knowledge about God. So I think the utterance of knowledge then is best understood as the gift of teaching and communicating scriptural truths, imparting the knowledge of God in a way that lands on you with clarity and spiritual power.
I think of someone like John Piper, whose teaching is thoroughly scriptural and really doesn't seem to include much of anything else, yet somehow, always it seems to open up new vistas into the knowledge of God.
[14:23] The gift of word of knowledge, word of wisdom. Then in verse 9, Paul mentions two other gifts. To another, faith by the same spirit. To another, gifts of healing by the one spirit.

By faith, Paul is not referring to faith in Jesus Christ through which we are saved. That faith is a gift also, but it's given to all believers. But Paul here is speaking of gifts that are given to one but not to another.
This is the gift of faith that is given to some but not to others. The spiritual gift of faith that Paul has in mind is something that he talks about later in chapter 13 too. It's the faith so as to remove mountains.
It's certain faith. It's a certain faith that God can and will do something extraordinary. And Jesus spoke of this gift in Mark 11, 22 to 24.
He said, Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, Be taken up and thrown into the sea and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.
[15:28] Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. Moving a mountain is Hebrew idiom for doing something that is very, very difficult, that is seemingly impossible.

So God's never going to give you a gift of faith in the context of actually removing a mountain because that's not consistent with the will of God. But some of you have probably experienced this gift of faith so you may have encountered a very severe dilemma or a problem.
Maybe it's a vocational problem. Maybe it's a relational problem. And you're pouring out your heart to God in prayer. And as you're laying down your requests before him, there comes a surging sense of confidence that God is going to do what you just asked him to do.
That's the gift of faith. And I think some of you have that. I've experienced that as well. At times, that's the gift of faith that God will do something and when you believe that with certainty, it happens.
The gift of faith is closely tied to the gifts of healing and the workings of miracles. And I think that's why they follow next logically in the list. And frequently in Jesus' ministry, we see him connect faith as a prerequisite for healing.
[16:37] So he tells a woman that had the problem with this illness of discharge of blood, she tells her, take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well. And in another context, in Matthew 13, 58, Jesus talks about how he didn't do, the narrator talks about how Jesus didn't do many mighty works there because of their unbelief, because their lack of faith.

So faith is often tied to gifts of healing and works of miracles. Gifts of healing is pretty obvious. God heals people of sicknesses. And there was a man from the church that sent us out, King of Grace, who had cancer.
He was given not much time to live. We prayed for him. He went back. They did a scan. There was no cancer at all. The doctor just says, oh, your immune system took over.
Okay, well, who made the immune system took over? I think God still heals today. And that's part of, and a lot of people can attest to this. And gifts of healing, workings of miracles, I think is a broader category that would include gifts of healing.
But it would also include other things like, you know, when God calls out judgments or we cast out demons in Christ's name. And notice something interesting here.

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[17:51] It's the word gift, used in gift of healing, is in plural. It says gifts of healing. And similarly, in the phrase, workings of miracles, the workings is in plural.

And I think these two are in plural in order to point out that these are not gifts that are given as permanent possessions of believers who have the gifts. So, for example, oh, I have the gift of healing so I can heal whenever I want.
So, I mean, come, bring everybody and I'll heal them whenever they come. I don't think that's how these gifts of healing function. I think they're in the plural to indicate that every instance of the healing is itself a gift.
So, we receive it anew every time a healing takes place. We receive the miracle anew every time a miracle takes place. So, that's why I'm skeptical when someone starts a TV show saying that he's this healer and says he could heal everyone even if he claims to be a Christian.
Right? Because these are gifts that God gives in its own context. And I think that may also be the reason why in the Bible no one is called a healer.
[18:53] No one is called a miracle worker. The Bible calls people who are gifted in evangelism and those apostles, those who have the gift of utterance of wisdom, they have titles.

They're called evangelists. They're called apostles. People who have the gift of prophecy are called prophets. People who have the gift of teaching, the word of knowledge, they're called teachers. But nowhere in Scripture are people called healer or miracle worker.
to the New Testament, to the people, to members of the church. I think it's because these are gifts that are given in and of themselves in specific contexts and situations. And they're not intended to be permanent possession of believers who have received them.
Let me ask you, do we have faith that God can and will heal today? Do we have faith that God can and will work miracles today? We believe that as a church.
And Paul took it for granted that these gifts would all function in the life and ministry of the church. I mean, look at how he lists them. He's not writing, expecting people to be astonished and like, whoa, tell me more about this.
[20:00] No, he just lists them in a matter-of-fact way like a grocery list. He expects these gifts to function in the life of the church. And we need to recover our faith for them, pray for these gifts and start to utilize them.

Next is prophecy. Since I'm going to speak at length about this when we get to chapter 14, I'm going to be brief here. But basically, those who have the gift of prophecy receive God's revelation, interpret it, and apply it for the sake of building up the church.
But prophecy, unlike scripture, is not normative revelation. It's not revelation that is given for all people at all times. Rather, it's given for specific people at specific times to edify them, to build them up.
It frequently involves spontaneous knowledge into people's circumstances and conditions. And its purpose, as stated later in chapter 14, is for the up-building and encouragement and consolation of the church.
Now, just because it's intended for up-building and encouragement and consolation doesn't mean that it only includes saying nice things. Sometimes, in 1 Corinthians 14, it says that the unbeliever who hears a prophecy in the context of the church, it says that the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.
[21:14] Sometimes, the most up-building thing that God can do is to humble us and expose our sin, and that's part of prophecy too. Charles Spurgeon, who is not known for his use of the gifts of the Spirit, includes this instance in his autobiography.

He was preaching, and all of a sudden, he pointed to a corner of a crowd and said, that man stole his gloves today from his employer, and after the service, the man comes up trembling, saying, this is the first time I've only done this.
Can you please not tell my employer? And he's converted as a result of that. I mean, that's the kind of things that happens today. It happens in the context of many of the churches that I've worshipped within our domination.
Of course, those who claim to speak in the Holy Spirit can actually be lying, and they can be channeling an evil spirit, which necessitates the next gift, distinguishing between spirits.
This gift seems to be specifically related to prophecy, because whenever Paul mentions prophecy, he also follows it up with the need to test it and to weigh it. So later he says in 1429, let two or three

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prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.
[22:26] And then he says in 1 Thessalonians 5, 19 to 22, do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Right? So, and the closest parallel really is 1 John 4, where it's very similar to what Paul says earlier about how only in the Spirit you can say Jesus is Lord.

He says, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God.
Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. The responsibility of weighing prophecies, testing prophecies, falls on all of us, but particularly on those who have the gift of distinguishing between spirits.
The next two gifts listed are the most controversial of them all. Paul tacks on the gift of various kinds of tongues and the interpretation of tongues at the end of the list, and he does the same later in verse 30.
And the reason he includes it at the end is not because it's the least important gift, but because it was the gift that was causing problems in the Corinthian church. And so we know from chapter 14 that these believers were obsessed with the gifts of tongues, and they used it in the context of corporate worship in an unruly, disorderly way.
[23:47] And interestingly enough, the gift of tongues is usually what causes problems nowadays too, right? There are people who insist that gift of tongues marks a new level of spirituality, spirituality, that only those who speak in the gift of tongues have been really baptized in the Spirit, they say, right?

And so they kind of create a new category of Christians, but that's an unbiblical attitude that resembles the attitude of the Corinthians who are valuing tongues above everything else.
And I'll speak on the gift of tongues at length in chapter 14 also, so I'm going to be brief here, but basically he says in 14.2, one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God.
For no one understands him but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. That's how Paul describes the gift of tongues. So that verse, in my opinion, proves definitively that contrary to popular opinion, the gift of tongues is not an ability to speak other human languages.
Rather, it's more akin to the tongues of angels which Paul mentions in chapter 13, verse 1. It's spirit-inspired utterances that is not humanly intelligible and that's why it requires another spiritual gift for understanding it.
[25:02] It's the interpretation of tongues. And some people try to explain away the gift of tongues by comparing it to forms of ecstatic speech found in various cultures throughout the world but Paul's instruction makes it really clear that this is not ecstatic speech.

People who speak in tongues have full possession of their mental faculties and they speak in various kinds of tongues. And so all these gifts Paul writes in verse 11 are empowered by one and the same spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills.
See that diversity in unity. Throughout verses 8-10 Paul repeats that pattern. To one is given this, to another this, to another this, but by the same spirit to teach that the different gifts given to different people that they're all from the same spirit of God.
And Paul concludes this by reiterating that truth. All these are empowered by one and the same spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills.
This is so important for us to grasp. It's the spirit of God who apportions to each one individually as he wills. Meaning, it's his prerogative.
[26:18] You can't earn it. You can't work really hard to get these gifts. They're gifts. It's the spirit who sovereignly decides whom he gives it to and he's the one who apportions it.

And this is a liberating truth because that means we can't control which gift we get and that means we don't have to fret or worry about it. God alone sees the whole picture of the church and how it's going to function.
So I have one gift, but if I have one gift but not the other, not another, but that's because God saw it fit to do so. They're called gifts for that reason. Christian theologian Alistair McGrath explains the difference between the fruit of the spirit and the gifts of the spirit with a really helpful illustration.
He says it this way, the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. That's from Galatians 5. And he says this, quote, Think of two trees.

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One is an apple tree. If it really is an apple tree, it ought to bear apples. You know it by its fruit. Similarly, Christians ought to show the fruit of the spirit in their lives, although the extent will vary from one person to another.
[27:26] Now, think of two fir trees. One is growing in a forest. The other is a Christmas tree inside a home with presents around its base. Those presents have nothing to do with the tree.

They didn't grow there. They were placed there by someone. They are someone's gifts, not the natural fruit of the tree. Now, not every fir tree becomes a Christmas tree and gets surrounded by presents, but that doesn't deny that they are fir trees.
Spiritual gifts are gifts. God gives them to those who he feels need them or who he feels can use them especially well, but they are not all given to everyone. It is no stigma to lack a charisma. That's a Greek word for gift. A particular spiritual gift. So don't be discouraged that you lack some or most of these spiritual gifts. It doesn't change the fact that you're a Christian.
It doesn't make you any less valued in the eyes of God. You have the fruit of the Spirit, but the gifts of the Spirit are distributed in different ways. But let's not be complacent either. These gifts are intended to function in the life and ministry of the church.
[28:36] That's why later in chapter 14, Paul exhorts us to earnestly desire the spiritual gifts. Ask God for them because he's the one who gives them. We should seek them. And look at Paul.

Paul doesn't expect these to be rarities. He expects to see them function in the life of the church as I said earlier. And so this is the point he's trying to make. The church is to be an interdependent body modeled after the triune God.
And so that's the foundation of the Trinity, the diversity and unity in the Trinity which forms the basis for the diversity and unity of the spiritual gifts. And now in verses 12 to 20 he speaks of the diversity of the gifts.
And he uses the metaphor of the human body to illustrate this. He says in verse 12, For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body though many are one body so it is with Christ.
Our bodies are made up of approximately I just did a Google search for these 80 organs, 200 bones, 650 skeletal muscles, and over 30 trillion cells.
[29:39] In a healthy body at any given moment many of these diverse parts are working in concert to enable us to live and function.

So it is with Christ. The church is described in scripture as the body of Christ and for all of us who are members of the body the same diversity and unity hold for us.
We are many, yes, but we are one. And this is not hypothetical or aspirational. It's a real unity and diversity that God has placed within the church. And Satan violently opposes this reality.
He sows denial. He sows doubt and discord. But we must cling to this reality by faith and daily strive to live in light of it. We are united to one another by virtue of our union with Christ.
And here's how we came to be united with Christ. Paul explains in verse 13. For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one spirit.
[30:45] The Holy Spirit is the bond of our union with Christ. He's the one that brings us together with our Savior spiritually. It's not our ethnic or social background that brings us together.

It's our union with Christ. It's the bond of the spirit that brings us together. Really, that's what it means to be a Christian. A Christian is someone by definition who is immersed in the spirit and has imbibed the Holy Spirit as this verse talks about.
A Christian is someone who is dripping wet with the cleansing water of the spirit. A Christian is someone who is filled with the invigorating and life-giving water of the spirit.
There is no such thing as a Christian who does not have the spirit of God. The very definition of a Christian is to be filled with the spirit. And of course, we have varying degrees of the fullness of the spirit, but we are all filled with the spirit, indwelled by the spirit.
And note that Paul is not speaking here of water baptism. He's speaking of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. And we experience this baptism in the Holy Spirit at the point of conversion. But of course, Christian conversion is marked by water baptism, which is why throughout church history often there is a relation between water baptism and being filled with the Holy Spirit.
[32:02] But it's not because the water baptism itself confers the spirit, but because it's associated with conversion, which is the point in which we are filled with the spirit. And that's why Acts 2.38

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says, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We see here distinct, three distinct yet inseparable aspects of Christian conversion. First, repentance by the individual, repentance and faith. Second, baptism by the church. Third, regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
The individual, the church, and the Holy Spirit each play a distinct yet inseparable role in someone's, roles in someone's conversion. So you shouldn't feel like you need to be more filled with the Holy Spirit before you can be baptized.
Baptism marks the Christian's spiritual birthday. It's not a coming-of-age party. And it's a sign of birth, right, not maturity. And just as the water breaking from a pregnant woman's amniotic sac marks the arrival of the baby, the water of baptism marks the Christian's new birth into the family of God.
And just as up to 60% of our human bodies consists of water, the defining characteristic of the body of Christ is the water of the Holy Spirit. Christians are indwelled by the Spirit and they have been immersed in the Spirit and they have imbibed the Spirit.
[33:28] And using this continuing metaphor, Paul highlights the diversity of the body of Christ in verses 14 to 20. He says in verses 14 to 16, For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.
No one in the church should say, Because I am not a pastor, I am not a part of the church. Because I am not a deacon, I am not a part of the church.
Because I am not an evangelist, I am not a part of the church. your role and function in the body is irrelevant to the question of whether you belong to the body or not.
Do you belong to Jesus Christ? Because if your answer to that question is yes, you have received the Holy Spirit and you are part of the body of Christ, whether you like it or not.
[34:33] Whether you believe it or not. To belong to Christ means to be the church. that's why it is inconsistent and unbiblical for any Christian to say, I'm a Christian but I'm not a part of a church.

I have a relationship with God, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, but I don't really have relationship with Christians. I've committed myself to Christ. I refuse to commit myself to a church. That kind of thinking completely is completely foreign to scripture. To live like that is to be a dislocated limb, a severed limb that's trying to do its own thing apart from the body.
It doesn't work. The one body is made up of man. Paul continues to expound on the necessity of diversity in verse 17. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing?
If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? Every part of the body has its own function and as such it is necessary for the body.
[35:41] You might look at yourself and think to yourself, if the whole church were filled with more people like me, then the church would be so much more healthy. But that's not true. You might look at another believer and think to yourself, if the whole church were filled with more people like her and less like me, then the church would be healthy.

But that's not true either. God gave each of us a unique complex of gifts and experiences and if the whole church were made up of people like that one particular person, we would not have a healthy body but a disabled body.
Do you have the gift of prophecy? Do you have the gift of hospitality? Do you have the gift of administration? Do you have the gift of evangelism? Do you have the gift of helping?
Do you have the gift of teaching? Do you have the gift of faith? Whatever your gifting might be, whatever your God-given role might be in this church, you are integral to the body of Christ and we need you.
It's when, as Ephesians 4.16 says, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly that makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.
[37:09] The body of Christ is counting on you. We are dependent on you. Are you doing your part? Are you using your gifts?

gifts? You have a gift. Probably more than one. That's what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. And the diversity of the body that Paul's talking about here is not a nice bonus.

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It's woven into the very fabric of the church. It's not a peripheral reality. It's an essential reality to the church. That's why it says in verse 18, but as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as He chose.
God chose to put you where you are. God gifted you to be the way you are. You are not a divine afterthought. You've not been placed in our church haphazardly, but intentionally and precisely according to God's sovereign and perfect plan.
So Paul writes, verse 19, if all were a single member, where would the body be? If the whole face were made up of eyes, or a whole body made up of arms, that's not an ideal body.
[38:27] That's a mantrasity. Thankfully, this is not how the body of Christ is constituted. As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

That's the diversity of the body of Christ. And verse 20 serves as Paul's transition to the next point, the unity of the body of Christ. He says, there are many parts, yes, yet one body.
And he continues the illustration in verse 21, 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. Notice that Paul's now comparing different body parts than the ones he used earlier.
Before, he compared foot to the hand, which are both pretty similar, and he compared eye to the ear, which are also both similar, they're sensory functions. But there he compared comparable parts of the body, but here he is comparing two contrasted parts of the body.
So he compares the eye to the hand, and head to the feet, so two very different parts of the body, and he does that for a reason, because the eye directs the hand where to go, and it's the head that occupies the most prominent place in the body, and the feet that occupies the least prominent place in the body, and it has to support the head.
[39:43] So by adjusting the illustration this way, Paul's addressing those who occupy more prominent roles and positions within the body of Christ, those who have the view from above, so to speak, and calling them, he's calling them to unity, just because, and he says in verse 22, on the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

A sense of superiority can lead to an illusion of self-sufficiency, but Paul says, don't you dare think that just because you occupy a more prominent place, a more public place, a more glamorous role that because of that you are more valuable than these people.
The eye can feast over a delicious meal all it wants, but the body will derive no nourishment from that feasting unless the hand takes the food to the mouth. The head can be full of useful knowledge that can serve the rest of the body, but you can put little of it to use unless the feet takes it to places where it needs to go.
The diversity of spiritual gifts that God has distributed among us, we need that, and because we need each other, we need unity. We cannot fully function without unity in the church.
The appendix, I don't know if you guys know about it, every time I say this, there's always someone in the crowd that says, oh, but appendix doesn't have any function in the body, right, so it's a useless part of the body, right? But the appendix actually, it's like that, it's that small tube like organ attached to our intestines, and for many years, it actually was thought that the appendix didn't have any useful functions, but now people believe that it actually, it keeps good bacteria in our bodies to help our digestive systems.
[41:28] So it does have an integral role and function in the body. Similarly, no one in the church, I assure you, is extraneous or superfluous. Don't believe Satan's lies that no one would miss you if you left the church.

Don't believe Satan's lies that you have nothing worthwhile to contribute to this church. We need each other, and this calls for unity in the body of Christ.
Similarly, Paul continues in 23, 24, on those parts, the body that we think less honorable, we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require.
There's a series of word plays here, and to bring that out, like, we could translate it this way, it says, on those parts of the body that we think less honorable, we bestow the greater honor, and our immodest parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more modest parts do not require.
So Paul's here speaking euphemistically of the sexual organs, and there are parts of the body that are deemed less honorable and immodest to show, yet precisely for that reason, we accord them special honor, don't we not?

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[42:53] And we accord to them special modesty by covering them up. The presentable parts of our body, like the face, do not need special treatment, but our unpresentable parts do need special treatment.

Paul's trying to teach us that appearances can be deceiving. If there's a member of the church who doesn't shower frequently enough so that he or she stinks, if there's a member of the church who is socially awkward and sometimes rude for that reason, if there's a member of the church who is simply embarrassing to you, don't for a moment think that you would be better off without him or her in the church.
Accord the greater honor to that person. Treat him or her with special care. That emotionally exhausting member, that needy member, is not a nuisance, but an advantage for us, a privilege for us.
That person is not a burden to us, but an opportunity for us to demonstrate Christ-like love and service. that person in God's providence and sovereignty is serving a very important role in the church.
Because, as it says, verse 24 to 25, God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.
[44:29] If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. The church is a body. It's like a living organism that needs all of its limbs and organs to function.

It's that, so that when even one part fails, the whole body is ailing. We need each other. There should be no division in the body, and we should have the same care for one another.
This next illustration will be a favorite of Steve's, but at the end of 2017, James Harrison, a linebacker in the NFL, who was the franchise sack leader of the Pittsburgh Steelers, was released by the team and was soon picked up by the best and greatest team in NFL history, the New England Patriots.
And reflecting on that during a quiet moment in the locker room, he said to an interviewer, I don't have ill will toward the Steelers. At the end of the day, it's a business. That's the thing people don't understand.
It's not a family. We may say we're family, but when it comes down to it, if you can't do what the company wants you to do anymore, they'll get rid of you. So it's a business.
[45:38] I understand that. I've been cut eight, nine, ten times. It's nothing new to me. That was a very revealing statement. Because nowadays, everyone likes to throw around the word family.

Schools say that they're a family. Sports teams say that they're a family. Companies say that they're a family. But at the end of the day, we know that they're not families by the way they treat their members. If you don't make the grade, you lose your scholarship and you have to drop out.
If you don't play well, you get cut. If you don't generate enough profit, you get fired. But the church really is the family of God. We are one body.
So we stick with each other through thick and thin. good times and bad times. If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together.
When we pull a muscle in our leg, we walk with a limp and let the other parts compensate for it. When we have a tooth ache on one side of our mouth, we let chew on the other side.
[46:52] make up for that until we can go to a dentist. When you have a cut on your finger, do you out of annoyance amputate it? No, you bandage it.

I mean, of course, that'd be stupid, but you put a ornament on it. You take care of it. You nurse it. That's what we do to one another. Have the same care for one another.
That's the kind of radical community that the body of Christ is meant to be. So Paul concludes in verse 27.
Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, and miracles, and gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.
I've run out of time, so I'm not going to go into detail with those points because I think you know most of them I've dealt with in the recent past. But what's remarkable is that he adds here gifts of helping and administrating.
[48:04] So helping is a general term for all kinds of assistance, especially helping the weak. And the word administrating means to steer or pilot. It refers to some kinds of leadership gift. And these

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are what we would think of as very natural gifts.

They're not supernatural in our own perception. But in scripture, there is no distinction between natural gifts and supernatural gifts. They all alike come from the same spirit of God and are given for the upbuilding of the church.
So don't despise the more ordinary natural gifts. Among us, they are no less needed and they are no less spiritual. And the answer to the rhetorical questions that Paul asks at the end is no.
Not all are prophets. Not all are apostles. Not all speak in tongues. He takes that for granted because that's God's design. Because if everybody could do everything, then there would be no need for the church.
He's designed that the church would be interdependent. An interdependent body, not a jumble of independent limbs and organs. The diversity of the gifts represented in the body necessitate that we seek unity so that we can fully function with each part doing its part.
[49:22] But of course, if we're honest with ourselves, we have to acknowledge that the very diversity that necessitates unity also makes unity more difficult. Our pride in thinking that our own gifts are more integral to the body than that of others.

Our narrow understanding of the gifts that make us mistrust and misunderstand others and their gifts. These all conspire together to make it more difficult to reflect the unity that is ours in the Holy Spirit.
For this reason, Paul adds this one verse, and he pushes us toward the higher gifts on the one hand, and he points us toward a still more excellent way in verse 31.
The higher gifts is a reference to gifts that have greater potential for building up the body. That's how Paul ranks them in chapter 14. That's why he says prophecy is great in tongues because it has more potential for building up the body of Christ.
So for Paul, what's amazing, what makes a gift better is not his wow factor. Oh, wow, that's amazing. But it's potential to build up a church. So if we focus on that, if we pursue the higher gifts, then our focus is not on ourselves and our own glory, but in the good of the church, and that brings us together.
[50:34] And then also he says seek a still more excellent way, and he will elaborate on that in the entire chapter of chapter 13, and talk about love, which is the fruit of the Spirit, not a gift of the Spirit, but it's the context, the only context in which these gifts can function the way they're supposed to, so that we can reflect the diversity and unity of the church.

It has to be characterized by love. In short, what he's saying is that we have to follow Christ's example. John 1, 14, 16 tells us that Christ was full of grace and truth, and it was from his fullness that we received grace upon grace.
The word grace in Greek is charis, from which we get the word gift, charisma. The Christ's grace toward us is the source of all spiritual gifts.
And Christ was the only human being to ever live that had God's grace and fullness. He's the only person to ever live that didn't need us, that didn't need the church.
Yet he gathered his disciples and built the church. Instead of being selfish in his self-sufficiency, he poured out his gifts to the church. And how did Christ pour out his gifts to the church?
[51:55] He won the right to do so. He received the Spirit of God for our sake to do so by giving his life on the cross as a self-sacrifice for sin.

He humbled himself by taking on human flesh, and he humbled himself still further by becoming obedient to death, so that through his death we might have life, joy, and freedom.
That's the pattern, the gospel pattern of Christ with which we are to use our gifts. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
Look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. It's only when we do this and use our gifts, that's when we grow up in every way to him who is the head.
As we, each part does its work properly, and we build ourselves up in love. Let's reflect on that in a moment of silence. And we'll have our prayer leader come up to lead us in prayer.

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