

# First Corinthians

July 6, 2025

Chapter 12

## The Matters of the Spiritual Part 5

“Manifest Grace of the Holy Spirit”

Chapter 12:22 - 30

### (7) Weaker Members are Necessary (12:22)

Paul emphasizes the importance of every part of the body, asserting that the weaker members are essential. Verse 22.

*<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;*

Paul counters the idea that some members are considered less important. He asserts that those who may seem weaker or less honorable play a crucial role in the body. This challenges societal views that equate worth among the members. In the Church, those who might appear less significant are essential to the overall health and functioning of the body.

### (8) Bestowing Honor on Less Honorable Members (12:23)

Pointing to the weaker members again, Paul emphasizes the importance of honoring those who are less honorable. Verse 23.

*<sup>23</sup> and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable*

Still, using the analogy of the human body, Paul emphasizes bestowing greater honor on those parts that may be viewed as less important. In the Church, this refers to the roles of the saints, which are often overlooked yet essential for the Church's mission.

*“...and our less presentable members become much more presentable.”* The human body must honor all its members. Even the smallest part of the body, if it becomes sick, can disrupt the entire health of the body and can even be deadly. Just think of the little appendix. Likewise, the Church is called to honor all saints, especially those whose contributions may not be immediately recognized but are essential to the overall health of the Church. If it weren't for the saint who washed the forks from the last Church fellowship meal, a preacher or saint might have used that fork and become severely ill with food poisoning after the next fellowship meal. The role of the kitchen saint is just as crucial to the health of the Church as that of the pulpit preacher.

### (9) God's Design for Honor (12:24)

Now, Paul explains God's design for honor in both the human body and, by extension, the body of the Church. Verse 24.

*<sup>24</sup> whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,*

*“Whereas our more presentable members have no need of it.”* The parts of the human body all work together in unison; however, no part of the human body can consider the needs of the other parts that make up the whole. Similarly, there are often saints in the Church who do not see a need for other saints within it. In my fifty years of ministry, I have frequently heard statements from more powerful people in the Church, such as, “We need to get rid of that person. He does not meet the standard of our Church,” or “Why does that person come here? He is not one of us?” Notice that

I referred to “more powerful people in the Church” when mentioning these remarks; I did not call them saints. A true saint, in a right relationship with God, would never say such a thing. Some churches I have served have had influential members who financially bought their way into positions among the power brokers. However, in each case, there were consequences for elevating those individuals to decision-making roles. It seemed that during the decision-making process, they forced their way in while all the involved saints recognized it was not God’s way. Nevertheless, those in power often dismiss those who do not resemble themselves.

*“But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the member that lacked.”* However, God is not like the powerful people in the Church. God has arranged the saints of the body in such a way that those who may lack honor will receive additional honor. God values each member and acknowledges their unique contributions.

#### **(10) No Division in the Body (12:25)**

Recognizing the divisions within the Corinthian Church, including members who are stronger and weaker, Paul emphasizes that there should be no divisions in the body (verse 25).

*<sup>25</sup> so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.*

Paul explains that the division problem within the Church must be addressed. Here is his straightforward solution: saints are meant to care for one another, ensuring that no one is excluded. Once we acknowledge that each saint holds value, division disappears.

#### **(11) Shared Suffering and Honor (12:26)**

Recognizing the value of all saints in the Church, Paul speaks of the shared suffering and honor within it. Verse 26.

*<sup>26</sup> And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*

Paul concludes by demonstrating the interconnectedness of the body: when one part suffers, the entire body feels the pain; when one part is honored, everyone shares in that joy.

A strange thing happens in most churches when a saint suffers: other saints start showing up at the sufferer's door with food—casseroles galore! Saints of the church, whose names often remain unknown—those unseen individuals who fill the pews, those who vote but are proverbially thought of as the flowers on the wall—do what they do best: they cook. That’s their contribution. They empathize with the suffering saint, feeling their pain even without knowing them. Because cooking is their gift, the Lord guides them to prepare a casserole and deliver it to the suffering saint. This serves as a perfect example of how the seemingly weaker saints in the church rise to the occasion when another saint is in need. When one saint hurts, all saints hurt.

There are occasions when saints are honored. In those moments, all the saints of the Church receive recognition. When a wayward son of long-time saints comes to know the LORD, it brings great honor to the parents, and the entire Church rejoices with them. When a saint or a saint’s child graduates, that honor reflects on the whole Church. When a saintly couple welcomes a new baby into the world, it brings honor to both the parents and the Church. When one saint is recognized, it bestows joyful honor upon all saints.

#### **4. Many Members of the Christ Body (12:27)**

Paul now informs the Corinthian saints that they are part of the many members Paul now informs the Corinthian saints that they are part of many members.

<sup>27</sup> *Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.*

The saints of Christ's body have responsibilities. Each saint is called to act in a way that honors Christ and serves others. This means that each saint has a place in the Church, which is Christ's body. It signifies that each saint represents Christ's body in a lost and sinful world. Each saint plays a role in Christ's body for God's purpose. Furthermore, each saint has something to contribute to the mission of Christ's body.

Therefore, saints should work together to eliminate divisions within Christ's body and unite, focusing on Christ's goals and purposes.

**a) Paul's List of Appointed Goals and Purposes in the Church (12:28)**

What are Christ's goals and purposes for His Church? Here is Paul's list of designated goals and purposes in the Church: verse 28.

<sup>28</sup> *And God has appointed in the Church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.*

Paul highlights the various functions that saints contribute to the Church's overall health, effectiveness, and mission. When he states, "*And God has appointed,*" Paul clarifies that these functions are not chosen at random but are divinely appointed by God. Each function serves a specific purpose, as God has designed the Church in a unique way.

Recognizing that God appoints saints to various roles helps all saints appreciate the significance of their functions, encouraging them to serve faithfully in their designated areas.

"*First apostles, second prophets, third teachers.*" These three roles represent leadership positions in the Church. When Paul wrote this letter, it is likely that all but one of the Apostles were still alive and ministering throughout the Roman Empire. The LORD chose only thirteen men to be His Apostles to carry on His work after He ascended into heaven. Their mission was to establish the Church under His delegated authority. Over the next forty-one years, all the Apostles would pass away, and their roles in the Church would conclude. When Paul refers to "*second prophets,*" he is speaking of those men designated by the LORD to prophesy about the future. The LORD Himself was one of these prophets, and He granted His authority to foretell the future to His thirteen Apostles. The LORD spoke through Paul to reveal some aspects of the future. He would later use John as the final prophet to communicate the future through the vision of Revelation. John was the last Apostle and prophet to die in 98 AD. With John's passing, these first two roles in the Church would end.

But Paul then says, "*third teachers.*" If you remember, Jesus gave His Apostles the Great Commission, as recorded in Matthew 28. In that commission, His Apostles were to go into the world to make disciples and teach them all that He had commanded. Those disciples would make disciples and teach others the commandments of the LORD. The Great Commission was first given to the Apostles to initiate the process of disciples making disciples, generation after generation, until the LORD returned. The LORD's teachers are still with us today, fulfilling the LORD's Great Commission.

"*Then miracles, then gifts of healings.*" Following our definition of both found in 12:9-10, these two roles in the Church are essential as the Holy Spirit manifests them through the saints. If you remember, "*miracles*" refers to the power, might, strength, and ability to accomplish tasks in the Church that others view as impossible. "*Healings*" describes the role of those through whom the

Holy Spirit manifests to heal the hurting hearts, minds, and souls of others. It does not refer to physical healing.

When Paul presents *"Helps, administrations,"* he refers to those who assist and support others in ministry, while others provide organizational leadership and governance. These roles demonstrate that service and management are crucial for the health of the Church, fulfilling both practical and supportive functions; they are just as important as those related to teaching.

Then Paul adds, *"And various kinds of tongues."* Across the globe, diverse languages are spoken, and the same body of Christ embraces every saint from every language as a member of the Church.

**b) Paul's Questions Concerning the Appointed Functions in the Church (12:29-30)**

Now, Paul distinguishes his questions regarding the appointed functions in the Church, as stated in verse 29-30.

<sup>29</sup> *All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?* <sup>30</sup> *All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?*

Here, Paul's rhetorical questions illustrate the various functions within the Church as the Holy Spirit manifests through each saint. He begins with, *"All are not apostles, are they?"* Paul knows the answer to that. The LORD appoints only thirteen Apostles and no more. Paul then asks, *"All are not prophets, are they?"* Once again, Paul knows the answer. Only the Apostles have the designated authority to prophesy the future, and no one else. *"All are not teachers, are they?"* Of course not. The Holy Spirit manifests through saints as teachers, but not all are teachers.

By acknowledging that individuals are not all called to the same role, saints can value the diversity of the Holy Spirit's manifestations and understand the importance of each position in the Church's overall mission.

Continuing, Paul says, *"All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they?"* Paul understands that not all saints are strong leaders capable of guiding the Church to achieve what other saints might deem impossible. Have you ever heard the saying, "Too many cooks spoil the broth?" Or have you heard, "There are too many chiefs and not enough Indians?" Only one cook is necessary in the kitchen, even though there may be many helpers working under that cook's direction. Similarly, there is only one chief needed in each tribe, although he has many assistants to carry out his responsibilities. Likewise, there is only one human leader in each local Church body through whom the Holy Spirit expresses power to guide the saints in fulfilling the objectives and functions of that local body in accordance with the LORD's will. The leaders empowered in the local Church are the pastors, who have been given authority by the LORD to shepherd each flock. The same is true for the "gift" of grace "of healing." The Holy Spirit manifests this gift of grace for the purpose of healing. The Holy Spirit does not give this same manifestation of the gift of grace to all saints. A hurting and suffering person does not need to hear from the many; he needs to hear from the LORD and the saint the Holy Spirit chooses to manifest through.

*"All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?"* Some people are fortunate enough to speak several languages; however, as Paul asserts here, not everyone shares that fortune. Some individuals are fortunate enough to understand many different languages and dialects, as well as the meanings behind cultural terms, but not all saints are that lucky.