



Sermon – August 2, 2020  
Phillip Bethancourt

**Verses Covered This Week**

*1 Corinthians 12:12 – 13*

*1 Corinthians 12:24 - 26*

*1 Corinthians 10:2 - 4*

Well as you grab your seat, we're going to spend our time this morning, not in Ephesians, but in the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 12. 1 Corinthians 12. If you're a first time guest with us, welcome home. We're so glad you're here. We want to connect with you out at the welcome desk out in the lobby after this so that we can learn more about you. And for our first service as gathered here today, we did not get the chance to let you know in person the good news with Tim Skaggs. It's official. He's coming. He's starting September 13<sup>th</sup>. Isn't that great news? We're so excited to welcome back one of our own. And as we look ahead to the Fall, we're kicking off the Fall semester in two weeks, August 16<sup>th</sup>, and we're going to be studying the book of Colossians. That's what we'll be spending our next study through. And so I want you to start readying your hearts for that now. Even as we turn our attention to this familiar passage from 1 Corinthians 12. What Paul's going to do for us is give us a picture of the church. Not just what we are called to do, but who we are in Christ. So let's look at what he says to us beginning in verse 12.

*<sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

Ben Golliver had finally landed his dream job. He was an NBA reporter for the Washington Post. But his dream job just recently turned into a nightmare. Because he was selected as one of 10 reporters who were allowed to enter the NBA bubble. And if you know what's going on there, the NBA's doing things differently than other sports leagues where they're basically bringing all the personnel that are needed to conduct the rest of the season into a bubble of protection to try to restrict the risk of Coronavirus. And so in order to enter into this opportunity, he had to spend 7 days entering the bubble. And here's what that looked like for him and the other reporters. They showed up and checked into the hotel. They entered into their hotel room after having proved that they had a negative test before arriving. And for the next 7 days he had to spend every living moment confined to his hotel room. He could never leave. He could never

walk out that door. The only time that door opened was when they brought him food or they came to test him. Because over the course of those 7 days, he had to have a negative test in each occasion in order to pass on to the next step. How do you exercise? What do you do for fun? How do you complete your work? Those were some of the challenges that he faced. But the reason behind why the NBA is doing that is because they are setting apart a group of people in order to purify them to pursue a purpose. And that purpose, obviously in their case, is for the sake of playing out the rest of the basketball season. But as we turn our attention to 1 Corinthians 12, when Paul speaks of the church as the body of Christ, isn't that in a sense the picture that we have here? That in the gospel, God is marking out a people for Himself. He is setting them apart in order to purify them so that they might carry out a purpose. So that they might live on mission. But at the same time it's totally different than what we see in a case like with this NBA bubble. Where in that case, they are set apart in order to be isolated from the outside world. And in the case of the church, we are set apart so that we can be intentional with the outside world. And as we look at this passage, I want you to think about what's happening in this moment. Paul has just finished writing in the preceding section about the spiritual gifts that the Spirit gives to the church. He has gifted each one of us who are a part of the body with gifts. And now he's going to speak about how those gifts come together in one of the greatest gifts the Spirit gives us, the church itself. And what we're going to notice is that as we prepare our hearts for this fall season and we look at this passage on the church, what we're going to find is that Paul is reminding us of two key realities that must mark our life in terms of who we are as a church. And I want you to notice the first one back in verse 12.

Paul says that the church is one body united in Christ. You'll notice the way that he speaks in verse 12 of the church in a unique way. He's not thinking of the church primarily as a place, but as a people. It's not primarily an organization but, in a sense, a living organism. In this case, as he says there, it is a body. And if that's true, then what that's going to shape the way that we understand how Christ raises up and establishes His church. We're going to see that the church should be unified in its composition. So look back at verse 12. He says there.

<sup>12</sup>Just as the body is one and has many members,

So if you look throughout the New Testament, this theme of the church as the body of Christ shows up repeatedly. But never more clearly than right here in chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians. And what we see here is him talking about unity and diversity together in the church. So we know what that looks like. Maybe you see many players, but one team. Many pixels, but one screen. Many soldiers, but one army. Or perhaps in Aggieland, one of the ways we see this playing out is at halftimes on Saturdays in the fall when you see the Aggie band take the field. You remember the first time you went as a child, or when you get to bring a guest who's never seen us always win halftime. They watch that band march and even though there are hundreds of them who are distinct from each person, it is as if they are one. They are many and yet one. And that's the picture that Paul is giving us here of the church. That we are united as one, brought together by Christ. And it's significant that he points this out because he has just talked about spiritual gifts in the church which could have the potential to divide them. But instead he says, the greatest gift of the Spirit by Christ is the unity that we have in the gospel. And I want you to see the way that he talks about this. Just hold your spot there and look down later in 1 Corinthians 12 down to verse 24. And notice the way that in 12:24 he speaks at length about the church as the body of Christ when he says this:

<sup>24</sup>But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, <sup>25</sup>that there may be no divisions in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

There's this picture here of unity. That there is no division. That there is a bearing of one another's burdens. That we are giving one another the same care for each other. And when those of us who are weeping are weeping, we come alongside and weep with them. And when those of us who are rejoicing are rejoicing, we come alongside and rejoice with them. And I felt that in my heart over these last two weeks. Losing a best friend like John Powell and you coming alongside me and grieving with me. But at the same time last Sunday as we had Tim and Jamie back and seeing the joy and excitement that rejoicing together. That is the picture that Paul is laying out of the body united in Christ. But I want you to notice the way that he speaks of it there. That there are many members, many body parts, and each serving a different function. So in the human body there are some vital organs that you can't live without: your brain, your heart, your lungs. But there are others that are seemingly less important or perhaps unnecessary. Maybe your wisdom teeth or a spleen or an appendix or a gall bladder that can be removed but you can continue to function. And regardless of what role you play in the church here at Central, God is giving you those gifts and giving you that calling for a reason. So maybe right now you are staying at home because of Coronavirus. You feel like you're shut in. You can't contribute anything here. Your prayers this morning for our church are making all the difference. The phone call you make to check in with other people that are in the exact situation as you is a part of you building up the body. Or maybe you're new to the faith. You're a 10-year-old in this room who's just come to know Christ and you're still learning what it looks like to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel. God is ready to put you to work; to use you as part of the body of Christ to help build it up into the fullness that He has called us to here.

We see this picture of unity in the body of Christ. But I want you to notice as verse 12 goes on, we don't just see that the church is unified, we also see that it is unique. Because if you'll notice the second half of the verse he says that all the members of the body, though many, are one body so it is with Christ. So he's speaking there of the members, these different body parts. And in the human body there's over 200 bones. There's dozens of vital organs. Each one of them is in a different location. It carries out a different function but they come together to achieve the mission that your body is setting itself on at any point in time. And that's the picture Paul is laying out. That though we are many, we are one. That we are brought together for a common purpose. That the fact that we are many members means that there may be unity, but not necessarily uniformity. Each one of us is equipped in different ways and wired with different interests and God uses that distinction. Now Paul is writing this letter to the church in Corinth. A place that had many temples to pagan gods, one of which was Asclepius, the god of healing. And what those who have discovered and uncovered archaeology sites with that temple have found is that one of the common practices in that time period there is that people who were injured, hurt, or sick would come and bring offerings to this god of healing in order to find healing for their body. And the way they would do that is they would fashion different portions of their body, let's say they had a leg injury, they would make out a clay leg and they would bring that to that god with an offering. Or a hand or a head or a chest or whatever injury they may have, whatever sickness they may experience, they would use the body as part of their

worship to this pagan god right here where the Corinthians were. So isn't it interesting that when Paul writes here and speaks of the church, he is using language that would be all too familiar in that culture. But he turns it upside down that the body isn't our offering to the pagan gods that might get us healing from our sickness, but instead, the body is the living organism connected to Christ called to live according to His purpose. And when we see the fact that Paul is speaking here of the church as one body, it changes the way that we understand what it means to be connected to a church like Central in membership. That when you step into membership with this church, it is the greatest opportunity you have to understand and to live out the biblical pictures of the church that you see throughout the New Testament including this call to be a part of the body of Christ. So that when somebody comes down here on a Sunday morning, they begin that membership process, they're united to us in membership. There's almost an organ transplant that's going on. Where a new body part is being grafted in right here at Central. And that's exactly why we call you to that. Since I've been here over the last three months, we've had people that have joined the church, who have just been here a couple weeks. But we've also had people that have come forward who have been here 12 years, 14 years, and have just taken the step. And we welcome that. And the reason that we want to encourage you to follow the New Testament pattern of moving towards church membership is because it signals a commitment. You're all in. It signals an accountability that you want to be held accountable for the way that you're living your life. And there is something unique that happens when we walk with God in faithfulness to uniting ourselves formally with the church in membership where we see the work that Paul is speaking here of the church being both united and unique coming together in ways you can't experience in any other way in the setting of a local church.

But as we look at this text, I want you to also turn your attention down to verse 13 where we're going to find how Paul is teaching us a second big idea about the church. And it's this. That the church is one body united by one Spirit. So look back at what he says there.

<sup>13</sup>For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – all were made to drink of one Spirit.

So in other words, if verse 12 explains what is true about the church, verse 13 is going to explain why it is true. If we're one body, verse 13 helps us understand why that is. And the reason is because we've been baptized into that one body in one Spirit. So there's a sense in which the Holy Spirit ensures that every member of the body of Christ has the same spiritual DNA. When an organ transplant happens, you need to make sure that the host body and the organ are a match in terms of blood type and other fits or there will be a rejection that occurs there. And what Paul was laying out for us here is that as we experience salvation, the baptism of the Spirit that occurs there, unites us into the one body of Christ. And so what we see in verse 13 is that the Spirit of God plays a number of key roles in the life of the church. You'll notice the way that he speaks of how the Spirit secures our deliverance. So back at the start of verse 13, when he says, in one Spirit we are all baptized in one body, what does he have in mind there? What is this picture of Spirit baptism? Well what Paul is reminding us of is at the moment of salvation, when we are rescued from sin and set free to follow Christ, that the Spirit comes upon us. We are in a sense baptized in the Spirit. We are raised to walk in newness of life. And in that moment, we see the Spirit taking up residence in our hearts. Right there at that instance. There is an immediate baptism of the Spirit that occurs. And so the question then becomes, what's the connection between the Spirit baptism that occurs at salvation and the water baptism that we'll see play out

week after week here in the baptistery at Central? Well what happens in that moment of conversion, when you are indwelt by the Spirit, when you are baptized in the Spirit, that is an internal change of your heart to a right standing with God. And when we go through the waters of baptism right back behind me here on any given Sunday here, in that moment it is an external expression of that internal reality. It is a public declaration of what is already personally true in the hearts of those that have believed in Jesus. And as we see Paul speaking here of baptism in the Spirit, he knows that both of those things happen in concert with each other. Because from the very beginning in the early church there was always a close connection from when you came to faith and when you were baptized. He tells us there that we're baptized into one body. That in that moment, we are united to the church. When someone goes through the waters behind us and enters into covenant with us through baptism, it's like they're walking through the front door of this congregation. We are welcoming them in as part of the body of Christ. As a matter of fact, next Sunday we're going to have the opportunity to baptize one of our own. And when you see that happen, when I'm standing up there and we dip him down below the waters and bring him up, we're reminded in that visual representation of the gospel, that just like what's happening up there in those waters, you and I, through the gospel, have been, have followed Christ being laid below the waters, laid as if it were in the grave. We have been buried with Him. We have died with Him. But at the same time as we lift him up out of the water next week, it will be a reminder to us that in Christ, we are a new creation. We have been raised with Christ. That all things have been made new. And that's why we want to invite those of you that have known Christ and haven't yet been baptized to follow Paul's pattern here in 1 Corinthians 12 in baptism. To publicly declare that you are uniting yourself with this church. See the Spirit seals our deliverance.

But he does more than that. We also see right in the middle of verse 13 that the Spirit overcomes our divisions. So if you'll look there, he speaks about Jews or Greeks, slaves or free. These would be the two primary divisions that would be experienced in that cultural time period. That of ethnicity, Jews and Greeks, did not mix well. And that of social status, of slave and free, those were separated. There was isolation. There was often animosity intention that would occur there and yet what Paul was showing us is that the gospel tears down the dividing walls that might otherwise separate us. That in the blood of Jesus Christ, He overcomes our divisions by the power of the Spirit. That we can set aside our preferences and desires in order to follow Him. Now one of the things we love about being back in Texas is the amazing food here. We've been out in a Tex Mex desert in Louisville, KY and Nashville, TN for over a decade. And so the fact that you can get good enchiladas anywhere you go makes me so happy. And if I could have my way, I would spend all my time eating Tex Mex, barbeque, maybe some Texas Roadhouse rolls, top it off with a strawberry tart. You know what I'm talking about. My taste buds would be so pleased by that. But even though those taste buds would be content, over time if that's all I consumed, the rest of my body wouldn't be so happy with me, would it. Especially my waist line. And if we simply make decisions with our own body to satisfy some portions of it, some aspects of it, without looking at the greater good of what we need in our body as a whole, then we are failing to care well for our body physically. And how much more is that true for us spiritually as a church? That what we are called to do is not just to satisfy our own desires, to prioritize our own preferences, but instead to be willing to crucify them for the sake of the greater good of the congregation. That has everything to do with your musical preference on a Sunday morning to how you feel about if we're wearing masks and insisting too much on that or not enough. Whatever preference you have, the pattern that Paul is laying here when he speaks

about how the gospel sets us free from natural divisions that would otherwise occur is he's reminding us of the reality. That we are called to reflect our Savior who laid down His own desires even to the point of going to the cross for the sake of you and me. But notice the way that this passage ends. Because it's going to carry us right into our partaking of the Lord's Supper this morning. We see the way that the Spirit satisfies our desires. Look back at the end of verse 13. He tells us:

*And all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

So you have this parallelism going on in verse 13 where he speaks of being baptized in one Spirit now drinking of one Spirit. In verse 13 you see this repetition of him speaking about one and all, one and all, over and over again. And as he speaks here of drinking of one Spirit, he is talking about the spiritual abundance that we have in Christ. That the Spirit satisfies our desires. He meets our needs. That we can partake of the living water that comes from Christ. You can see what Paul has in mind here. If you'll just hold your spot right here in verse, in chapter 12, but slide back a page in your Bible to chapter 10 in verse 2. Because Paul uses this exact same language about baptism and drink when he is speaking of Israel in chapter 10, verses 2 through 4. Notice what he says there.

*<sup>2</sup>and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup>and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup>and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.*

You see how he talks about that there? Baptism and drink, united together. But look at how chapter 10 speaks of what they're drinking. That they drink from the rock which is Christ. Those living waters that supply our needs, that sustain us in difficult seasons. There's the same connection Paul is making for Israel in chapter 10 that he is making for the church right here in our passage today. That in both passages, it is the Spirit of Christ who works in our hearts to satisfy our desires with living water. And I can't help but wonder this morning if you've experienced that living water today. The sins of this world leave us dry, leave us weary, leave us longing for deliverance that can only be found through the blood of Christ. Have you tasted those living waters? The call of the gospel this morning is inviting us in to exactly that. And that's especially relevant. Isn't it fitting that as we turn our attention now in just a moment to the Lord's Supper, that we are coming to this verse where he's speaking of the church as one body and right before this in 1 Corinthians in chapter 11 is when Paul speaks about the Lord's Supper. And in just a moment, as we take of the bread, as we drink of the cup, we are going to taste and see that the Lord is good. When we come together once a month to celebrate the Lord's Supper, we're not just hearing the gospel preached, but we're tasting the gospel as we partake of that broken body. And as Paul speaks here of us as one body in Christ, when we take of this bread, we're reminding that our one body as a church is only possible because of the broken body of Jesus.

So in just a minute after we pray, we're going to have a response time in which we are going to partake of the Lord's Supper. And we want to invite you to the table today. If you know Jesus, you're walking with Him as a baptized believer, this is the family meal that's for you. And what we're going to do, just as we did last month, this is a little bit different process where you'll notice around the room there are tables set up where we have set out individually packaged

Lord's Supper elements for you to partake of. And as we sing the response song, after I pray, we want to invite you to make your way to those tables and to pick those up throughout this time. In fact, if it's easier for your family, you can just send one person from your family to pick those up and to grab them in order that we can take them back. But as we do that, as we prepare our hearts for this moment, we're reminded of what Paul speaks of here in verse 13. That they all drank of the Spirit. That as we take of the bread, as we drink of the cup, as we live out our lives as one body, we are a living picture of the way that God has rescued us and united us together by faith by the power of His Spirit. Let's go to the Lord in prayer and prepare our hearts to respond to Him in this time.

Lord, Your word tells us that if we eat the bread and drink the cup, we need to examine ourselves so that we might do it in a worthy manner. And I pray that in this moment of quiet, we would do that now, Lord. That You would open our hearts to us, bring us conviction of sin, that if there is confession that needs to be made, God, that You would help us to do it. And we ask in this moment as we take of the bread, we drink of the fruit of the vine, that we're reminded of Your broken body and shed blood poured out for us and if there are people in this room that have not yet come to know You, Lord, You would open their eyes to see You now. And we pray, Lord, that as we move ahead as a church that you would continue to knit our hearts together in love and to prepare us to live out what you've called us to be; one body, united by Christ, in the power of Your Spirit. And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.