

Faithful in Fellowship, Part 1

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Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12–19, 25–27

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Introduction

First Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12—would you turn to it? And then, look up here. We’re talking about this factor of faithfulness, and the factor we’re talking about today is fellowship. And, we’re talking about fellowship in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, there are many figures of speech to describe the Church. The Church is described as a building. And, the members of the Church are building blocks in that building, and Christ is the foundation. The Church is described as a bride—Christ Himself being the bridegroom. But, the figure of speech that we’re talking about today is this—that the Church is described as a Body, with Christ as the head and we, the members of His Body. It’s so important that you understand that while Jesus Christ and the Church are not identical, they are inseparable, like the bride, the groom, the foundation, the building, the head, and the body. You know, it’s kind of popular today to say, “Well, I’m a Christian, but I don’t believe in organized churches,” or, “Jesus—yes;

but the Church—no.” And so, they don’t attend. Oh, they may be members, but they go about three times: when they’re born, they get christened; then, when they are married, they go; and then, when they die, perhaps their funeral is there. So, they go when they’re hatched, and matched, and dispatched. The first time they throw water; the second time, rice; the third time, dirt—and that’s it. But, the Bible says that we are not to “[forsake] the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” (Hebrews 10:25).

Now, look in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12. And, here you’re going to understand something about the Church and your place in it—listen: *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ”* (1 Corinthians 12:12). That is the Body of Christ. Now, if I could leave this thought in your heart today, it would be this: you are somebody in His Body—you are somebody in His Body. You are important to Jesus, and, therefore, you are important to His Church. And, the Church is vitally important to you. Oh, dear God, please write that in our heart. Dear God, help us to understand that we are somebody in His Body and that the Church is the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, it is in that church that we have fellowship.

I. The Function of the Body

Now, think with me. First of all, I want you to think with me about the function of a body. What is a body? Now, we know what a physical body is—a human body—and the Church is analogous to that. So, what is the purpose of my body?

A. A Manifested Person

Well, first of all, in my body, there is a manifested person. Did you get it? A manifested person. Look up here. Do you see me? No, you don’t. What you see is my body. I’m on the inside looking out at you. You see my body. I am not a body. I have a body—I have a body. I live in here. It is called my “earthly house,” but all that you know about me you know through this thing called my body. You don’t know me any other way. All you ever know about Adrian Rogers is his body. You cannot know anything else about me apart from my body. “Oh,” you say, “yes, I can read what you wrote.” Who wrote it? This body. You say, “Well, I can hear what you say.” Who says it? This body. You see, there’s no way that you can know anything—not one iota, not one scintilla of a fact, can you know about me apart from my body. It is my body that manifests me. Everything that you know about me you have learned through my body. The body is a manifested person.

What is the purpose of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ? It is to manifest Jesus, to make Him known to this world. As He inhabits our humanity, we display His deity. And, Jesus Christ is known through His Body. That’s kind of frightening, isn’t it? Do you

know what this city knows about Jesus Christ? All that they can know is what they learn through the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, through you and through me. Jesus is the invisible part of the visible Church, and the Church is the visible part of the invisible Christ. Now, in a body, there is a manifested person.

B. A Ministering Purpose

In a body, there is a ministering purpose. Why does my body exist? To serve me. It doesn't exist for any other purpose except to do the will of the person who lives inside this body. I don't want my body to be doing anything for me—nothing! I want to do something through it. Now, think with me. The body is not here to do something to me, but it is to here to serve me. I mean, I don't want to wake up this morning and have my hand to greet me and say, "Good morning, Mr. Rogers. I'm here to shave you today. I'm here to scratch your ear and to write a few letters." I would be frightened to think that thing is going to do something like that—that it conjures up what it wants to do. I want it to be there to do the bidding of the person who lives inside. There is a ministering purpose. The body is to minister the life of the person who lives inside that body.

I'm told after World War II there was a cathedral that had been bombed in Europe, and some of the GIs thought that they would help rebuild the cathedral. And, in the courtyard of that cathedral, there was a statue of the Lord Jesus, who was there with His arms outstretched. They found most of the parts of that disintegrated statue and put it together, but they could not find the hands. And, somebody got a plaque and put these words on it: "He has no hands but our hands"—and put that on the statue. That is so true. He has no hands but our hands. We are His hands; we are His feet.

C. A Motivating Power

Thirdly, in a body, not only is there a manifested person, not only is there a ministering purpose, but there must be a motivating power. Got it? A motivating power. What makes my body a body is not only does it have eyes, and hands, and fingers, and feet, and legs, and arms, but it has life—life! There is a spirit in me—the spirit of life. And, when a man dies, he does what? He gives up the spirit. Now, what makes the Church a body is this—that the Church has life. The Church is more than an organization; it is an organism. The life of my body is my spirit. The life of His Body is the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. We sing and say it, "Brethren, we've met to worship and adore the Lord our God. All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down." A body without a spirit is a corpse, but a spirit without a body is a ghost. But, the Church is neither a corpse nor a ghost; it is a Body, the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, to manifest His person, to minister His purpose, motivated by His power—the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Other organizations meet; they're clubs. The PTA, the Girl Scouts, the Kiwanis—they're all good. But, there's an intrinsic and a vital difference between these and the

Church. The Church has the Holy Spirit. We're not merely an organization; we are an organism.

D. **A Mutual Program**

Now, because there is a manifested person, because there is a ministering purpose, because there is a motivating power, there must be a mutual program—a mutual program. What? We do it together. Now, look in verse 13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?”*—can you imagine a 175-pound eyeball?—*“If the whole [body] were hearing, where were the smelling?”*—can you imagine somebody sitting here with a body that looks like a TV dish?—*“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body?”* (1 Corinthians 12:13–19). You don't have a one-member body any more than you have a one-brick building. So, what's he saying? He's saying we have a mutual program. We have many members, but they all have one agenda. So, therefore, the Bible is not against organization. Your body is organized. That's the reason they call the parts of your body what? Organs—because they are organized.

Sometimes people foolishly say, “Well, you know, I have my own religion, but I'm against organized religion.” Well, if you mean you're against an organized church, you don't understand the Bible. The body has to be organized in order to function. And, when your body ceases to be organized, you are sick, very sick. Thank God for organization. Now, organization is not the purpose we exist for. It is to help us to meet our purpose. **It's like digestion. When organization is working correctly, you're really not aware of it. But, like digestion, when it's not working correctly, that's about the only thing you are aware of.** And so, we are to work together. The Bible says, *“Let [everything] be done decently and in order”* (1 Corinthians 14:40). When my ministry makes problems for your ministry or your ministry makes problems for my ministry, either I'm wrong, you're wrong, or we're both wrong. When the members of my body are rightly related to the head—when this hand is related to the head and this hand is related to the head—these hands have to be related to each other; they have to work together. Now, that is the function of the body.

II. **The Formation of the Body**

Let's talk about the formation of the body. How does this body get to be a body? Well,

look in verse 13. Look at it—look at it. Verse 13—chapter 12, verse 13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:13).

And, that one Spirit is the Holy Spirit. How is the formation of the body? Three things:

A. A Supernatural Birth

First of all, there’s the supernatural birth. You are born again. When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior—verse 13 calls it *“[drinking] into one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:13)—that one Spirit is the Holy Spirit. He is to you what water is to your body. Jesus said in John 4—and we spoke it last week: “I am the water of life. If you’re thirsty, you can come to Me and drink, and there will be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). He is, indeed, that water of life, and we drink into that Spirit. Today, if you’re thirsty, you’ll never find satisfaction until you drink from Heaven’s well and with joy you draw water from the well of salvation. And, I tell you this with all of my heart: if you’ll trust Him today, receive Him today, believe on Him today, He will change your life radically, dramatically, eternally. You’ll be so glad you trusted Jesus. I wish I could do it for you, but I can’t. There will be supernatural birth.

B. A Spiritual Baptism

And, after a supernatural birth, there will be a spiritual baptism. Look at it again—verse 13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). Who is the baptizer? The Holy Spirit. Into what does He baptize us? The Body of Christ. Who does He baptize? All of us who have drunk into that Spirit. The baptizer is the Holy Spirit. The believer is baptized, and he is baptized into the Body of Christ. Isn’t that what verse 13 says? *“For by one Spirit are [ye] all baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit of God places us into the Body of Christ. When does that take place? When you get saved. When you drink into the Spirit of God, the Spirit of God places you into the Body of Christ.

Now, sometimes people will ask you this question: Have you received the baptism of the Holy Ghost? Now, they mean something subsequent to salvation. But, this is not something subsequent to salvation, because if that were true, then some would have it and some would not have it. But, he says, *“For by one Spirit [have ye]”*—what’s that next little word? You’re not watching the scripture—*“For by one Spirit [have ye]”*—what?—*“all [been] baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). Learn something. In the New Testament, no believer is ever commanded to be baptized in the Holy Ghost—never. We’re commanded to be filled with the Holy Ghost. God would not command you to be baptized in the Holy Ghost, because you’ve already been. *“For”—what?—“by one Spirit [have ye] all [been] baptized”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). That’s Spirit baptism. You see, in Spirit baptism, you are placed into the Body of Christ, but when you’re filled, your

body is now yielded to Christ. And so, we're to be filled. Every part of my body is to be yielded to Him because I am in His Body. The Holy Spirit of God took me and placed me supernaturally into the Body of Christ.

Now, there are two kinds of baptism: there is spiritual baptism and physical baptism—baptism by the Spirit and baptism with water. John the Baptist said, “I baptize you with water. There’s One coming after me who is mightier than me who will baptize you with the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16), talking of the Lord Jesus. Now, listen—up there is a baptistry. It is a liquid tomb. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, when they receive Christ and are baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, they should show it by water baptism. It is not water baptism that puts you into Christ; it is Spirit baptism that puts you into Christ. The Holy Spirit of God puts you into the Body of Christ. Water baptism is the outward symbol, emblem, illustration, proclamation that you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, yes—you ought to be baptized with water after you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, after you’ve drunk into that one Spirit, after the Spirit of God has placed you into the Body of Christ. Then, to show it, you’re baptized. But, this is an emblem and a symbol of your having been placed by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ.

C. A Single Body

A supernatural birth, a spiritual baptism, and then a single body. Look at it again in verse 13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into”*—how many bodies?—*“one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13)—a single body. He takes many of us, and He makes us one Body in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 4: *“There is one body, and one Spirit”* (Ephesians 4:4). Hallelujah! That’s why there is the true unity of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Fellowship of the Body

Now, let’s move on to the third thing. I’ve talked to you about the function of the body, and I mentioned those things—the manifested person and so forth. I’ve talked to you about the formation of the body: there’s a supernatural birth, a spiritual baptism, and a single body that results. Now, let me talk to you about the fellowship of the body. What is the fellowship of the body?

A. We Share a Common Life

Well, first of all, because we’re in the Body, we share a common life. Look in verse 15: *“If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?”* (1 Corinthians 12:15–16). What is he saying here in these verses? He’s saying that we are bound together. We share a common life, because the

Holy Spirit that's in you is the Holy Spirit that's in me. We belong to one another. We can't be in competition with one another, nor should we live in isolation from one another. The foot and the hand both belong to the body.

Now, look at your hand—relatively attractive. You put jewelry on your hand. You can't see your feet because I doubt anybody here is barefooted, but most of you don't have gloves on. Interesting, isn't it? The hands are a little more attractive; feet, generally, are ugly. That's true. I mean, you know, we, every so often, we say, "You know, they've got nice looking feet there," but not so often. But, we say, "You know, hands—there's something about hands that are beautiful." People like to paint hands and look at hands and so forth. But, the foot is not as noticeable as the hand, but you'd have had difficulty getting in here today without yours. And, each member of the Body is important. You see, God made us where we need one another. Isn't that wonderful? Do you know why God made us different? So He could make us one—so none of us could function apart from ourselves.

Eyes are beautiful. Eyes are the mirror of the soul. And, you look in a person's eyes, and you could just seem to see the beauty of Jesus in a person that really loves the Lord. But, suppose you opened a dresser drawer and there were about nine of them rolling around in there? You'd faint. Suppose you walked in the lobby of the church this morning and there was a hand out there on the floor? You see, we have significance, as we find ourselves in the Body. God made us different, that He might make us one. If you go into the bookstore after the service today, you don't send your hand in there to get a book. You go in. You don't send your eyes in there to look at a book. You go in there, and you're a part of a Body. Now, some members of the Body, therefore, that don't seem necessary are very necessary. Question: When was the last time you ever said, "Lord, I really do thank You for my pancreas. Bless God for my wonderful spleen"? Now, you don't do that until your pancreas starts acting up, and then you might say, "Thank You, Lord, for my pancreas."

Joyce had gone somewhere, and I was doing the cooking in my house. So, I didn't want to cook, so I went to the corner restaurant for lunch and got a chili dog covered with chili. And then, that evening, I thought I'd cook for myself, and I went in the shelf, and there was a can of tamales that Joyce never would open that somebody had given us. So, I put that thing in there, and opened it, and filled it with Tabasco sauce, and put it in the oven, and heated it up, and wolfed it down. Then, about 9:30 or 10:00 at night, I was in my recliner, going over my sermon notes for the next morning, and I started to get up and didn't want to move. There was a pain that started here, and went here, and down around here and there. And, I said, "Well, you know, that's indigestion—a chili dog and tamales." And so, I got some Alka Seltzer, and that didn't help. And, I got some aspirin, and that didn't help. But now, it's getting to be 1 or 2 in the morning and

excruciating pain.

So, I got a medical book and began to read to find out what's wrong with me. And, it's about 1 in the morning—2. And, my daughter, who happened to be there, said, "Daddy, you're going to the hospital." I said, "No, not me. I'll be all right." She said, "Daddy, you're hurting. You're going to the hospital." I didn't want to go to the hospital. I mean, that's like saying, "I surrender"—to walk in there at nighttime. And so, I get in there, and the doctor begins to poke around on me and so forth. And, I said, "Now doctor, it's not my lungs, not my heart." The doctor said, "Would you be quiet for just a moment?" and said, "Sir, you've had a gall bladder attack." You know, all these years I had never praised God for my gall bladder—never one time had I thanked God for my wonderful gall bladder. It had done so much good. Let me ask you a question: Don't you take certain things for granted until they're gone or they begin to malfunction?

Question: Who opened the doors of this church this morning so you could come into it? You don't know. Who turned on these lights and set the temperature? Did you go to Sunday School class and have some coffee this morning? Who made that coffee? What are the names of the people right now who are working in that nursery, taking care of those babies over there, and changing those diapers, and fulfilling their motto, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed"? Who is doing that? Who is it that does so many things that we just simply take for granted? Let them stop doing it one time. Come here on a Sunday morning, and all the lights be off, and the doors be locked, and this building be cold, and there be no choir—then maybe you'll begin to say, "Thank God for the members of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ." We are one Body. Now, you know the people who sang these songs this morning, and you know those who preach, and so forth. You see those members of the Body. But, there are other parts you don't see. They're just as vital and just as important. And so, what I'm saying is this: What is the fellowship of the body? We share a common life.

B. We Are to Show a Common Love

And, not only do we share a common life, but we are to show a common love. Look in verse 25: God says He does this *"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it"* (1 Corinthians 12:25). Think with me, beloved brother or sister in Christ—because we're in the same Body, there can be no arrogance. I can never say I don't need you. There can be no envy. I can't say, "Well, I want to be an eye like you, rather than an ear or whatever." There can be no rivalry. We belong to one another. I don't need to try to get ahead of you. There can be no self-sufficiency, where I try to operate apart from you. There can be no disunity, where I don't like you. We're not divided.

All one body we,
One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.

...

Onward then, ye people, join our happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices in the triumph song (Sabine Baring-Gould).

We belong to one another.

He says here, “When one member suffers, every member suffers with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). I have frequently used this illustration: Have you ever hit your thumb with a hammer—I mean, really hit it? I’ve never had a baby, but a worse pain than having a baby. I’ll get a lot from that, I know. You hit your thumb with a hammer, and you go, “Waaaaaaaaa!” It just hurts. I’m talking about one that’ll give you a blue thumbnail for six months. What’s the first thing you did? I wasn’t there, but I’ll tell you exactly what you did: you grabbed it. Your hand came to the rescue. Second thing you did: you popped it in your mouth. Don’t say you didn’t; you did—you popped it in your mouth. And, the third thing you did: you did a little dance. Sure, you did. Now, what do the knees have to do with the thumb? I don’t know, but you’ve got to have that dance. I mean, it’s all together. “When one member suffers, every member suffers with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). Eat ice cream—it feels good all over. “One member rejoices; every member rejoices with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). That’s what God has intended the Church to be. Friend, when we come to church and we share our sorrows, they’re divided; and we share our joys—they’re multiplied. That’s why we have church! That’s the fellowship.

We are the Body of the Lord Jesus. We share the same life. We show the same love. Why? Because we serve the same Lord. Look in verse 27: “*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*” (1 Corinthians 12:27). Loyalty to Jesus means loyalty to His Body. You cannot love Jesus without loving what Jesus loves.

A pastor visited a home—a beautiful home of cultured young couple. There were no children in the home, but there was a dog that the members of that family fawned over, petted and loved, cuddled and coddled. The pastor said, “I may be walking on thin ice, but I want to ask you people a question. You love God. You’re intelligent. You have many creature comforts. But, there are no children in this home. I see the love that you lavish upon that dog. Forgive me for asking, but have you considered having a child that you might show that love to that child?” When that pastor said that, that woman burst into tears, sobbed in anguish, and ran out of the room. The pastor said, “Uh-oh. I said something very wrong.” He said to the husband, “Forgive me. What did I say? I know I said something terribly wrong.” He said, “Pastor, there’s no way you could know, but we

did have a child—a boy. He was the light of our life and the love of our hearts. He was taken ill. He died. The doctors say that we can never have another child. This dog that you see was his dog. He dearly loved this dog. Before he died, he made us promise that we would take care of his dog. Now Pastor, you may not be able to understand it. You may think we're foolish when we lavish so much love upon this dog, but in our way, it's our way of expressing love for our son. We love that dog simply because our son loved it so much." Friend, if for no other reason, I can tell you why you ought to love the Church: because God's Son loves the Church. All of its faults, all of its flaws, all of its failures, all of its foibles—God loves the Church, and so should you. If you love Jesus, you will love what Jesus loves. And, if you love the head, you'll love the Body.

Conclusion

May I make some suggestions to you?

A. Accept Yourself

You're somebody in His Body. Accept yourself. You may not be a shoulder to bear burdens. You may simply be an ear to listen or an eye to watch. Accept yourself.

B. Be Yourself

Number two: Be yourself. Don't try to be somebody else. When I first started preaching, I would look at other preachers, and I'd say, "I want to be him," or, "I want to be him." I figured out I could never be one of them, but I can be the best Adrian Rogers there ever is. There's only one Dale Palmer. You can be the best Dale Palmer ever. Only one Joe Jernigan—only one Jim Whitmire. Be the best of that. Accept yourself. Be yourself.

C. Give Yourself

And then, give yourself. Every part of the body gives. The heart gives. The lungs give. The liver gives. And, you have to give to get to live. We're in it together. Accept yourself. Be yourself. Give yourself.

D. Work Together

Work together. And, when we do, do you know who will be shown? Jesus, because He lives in this Body called *Bellevue*. What a fellowship! What a joy divine! We are the Body of Christ. Isn't that wonderful? That's wonderful. And, you get into the Body when you get saved.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. I want you to pray this prayer. If you're not certain that you're saved right now, I want you to pray this prayer: "Dear God"—just talk to Him right now, if you're not certain that you're saved and you want to be—"Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I

believe You're the Son of God. I believe You died for my sins and paid for my sins with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now, by faith, I receive You into my heart. Come into my life. Come in now, right now. Take control of my life, and begin to make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You. If You'll just give me the strength, I'll make it public today that I love You." Can you pray that? If you can, tell Him that. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Now, look up here. "Pastor, why did you put that last thing in there about making it public?" For this reason—for this reason: Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of Me, I'll be ashamed of you" (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). Jesus said, "If you'll confess Me before men, I'll confess you before My Father" (Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8). Walking an aisle doesn't save anybody, but what it indicates is what saves you—is that you're trusting Jesus and you're not ashamed of Him. That's what saves you. For the scripture says, "*Whosoever [believes] on him [will] not be ashamed*" (Romans 9:33; Romans 10:11).