

Title: Live like you Own it  
Text: 1 Corinthians 12.12-13  
Theme: The Baptism of the Spirit  
Series: 1 Corinthians #60  
Prop Stmt.

Read Text: 1 Cor. 12.12-13

Those of you who have been following along carefully in our study of this book, note that I have not dealt with all of the spiritual gifts yet as they are listed. Two of the more prominent ones, prophecy and tongues are dealt with rather extensively later on in this section of the epistle. Since, so much of what I would cover in explaining these is based upon those passages, I will simply wait to deal them in detail at that point. I do not believe that I am doing a disservice to the text at this point, since right now Paul's point is not to define each gift, but rather to point out that every gift is given by the Spirit for the common good of the body. At this point, he turns his attention to the importance of the body.

This past Tuesday, as KJ and I were talking, a friend called him and asked for a definition of salvation. Think about that for a second. If you were asked, "can you give me a definition of salvation" – what would you say? The word means to be rescued, or delivered and when used theologically it obviously refers to being saved from the penalty of sin. But, there is more to this word because there is so much more to being a follower of Christ than being saved from the penalty of sin. We are saved from something, to be sure, but we are also saved to something else. What we are saved to, is the focus of this section of 1 Corinthians.

"The body is a unit...so it is with Christ."

For a few years I was a volunteer soccer coach in a local kids league. The year begins in a rather predictable manner. The volunteer leadership begs and pleads for volunteer coaches. The coaches draft a team and then meet with all of the parents in order to beg and plead with them to volunteer to carry out certain team responsibilities. When it comes time to asking for volunteers, predictably the adults in the room stare at the floor or out the window. No one wants to take responsibility. I want my kid to play, I just don't want to have any involvement. At the games, the parents tend to sit by themselves. They bring their kids, watch their kids then leave. There is no sense that we are part of something that is bigger than us. The parents basically want to use the league to get what they want for their individual lives. There is no sense of adding value and benefit to the community, instead we only want to take from it to get what we want. What do you have for me? What will you do for my kid? Our involvement with others is only to the degree that we can get something in order to advance our own personal, private lives.

Here is the assumption that we are fighting against: "It's my life – leave me alone." Now, we deplore that thinking when it comes to the abortion issue. We can argue against a pro-choice position claiming, rightfully so, that it is more than your body, it's more than

your life. When you are pregnant, your life is undeniably connected to another life. What you do with your life affects another life. But, we seem to take the pro-choice philosophy into the church. It's my life – leave me alone. What does this text say?

“The body is a unit...so it is with Christ.”

But that is not how our world sees it and this world is squeezing us into its mold. Technology has enabled us to communicate without relationships. We can bank and shop over the internet so we don't have to talk with tellers and sales people. Couples text message each other, even while they are in the same home, while parents IM their kids in order to get their attention. We are so connected electronically, yet disconnected personally because we are so empty and shallow in belief and character. Therefore, even though we have the technological tools to communicate we have nothing of substance to share. We have depersonalized ourselves because we have constructed such enormous compartments in our thinking in order to separate the different parts of our lives. Ours is a private and lonely existence. One couple told me this week, we don't have a computer, people have to actually call us on the phone. I thought, good for you! Because that's the irony. The more time-saving appliances we have, the less time we seem to have. The more tools we have to communicate, the more shallow our relationships are. We are able to stay in touch with everyone and yet no one really knows us, because we do not even take the time to know ourselves. Our emotions are manipulated by movies. Our minds are controlled by video images. Our values are shaped by advertising. But, this personal privatization comes at a terrible price. We are losing what it means to actually be human because we are losing the ability to have deep relationships. Our lives are like movie sets. Our bodies are just fronts for something that we appear to be, but in reality we are hollow people. So, how are we supposed to do church in this culture of intense privatization and hollow, desperate lives?

I am looking at this text and I am looking at this culture and the lives that many of you are living and I am aware of this fact. It is humanly impossible for me to convince you of this and make you see what I see and taste what I taste and live as we are called. It is humanly impossible, but I rejoice that it is not up to me. I am so thankful for the Spirit of God. He's got me covered.

1. **The body works when all the parts work as one.** – v.12 (the analogy)

This verse is very straight forward. It has five parts to it.

The body is a unit

It is made up of many parts

All of its parts of many

They form one body

So it is with Christ.

What do you see? You see the unity and the individuality working in harmony. Sure, we are parts. There are all sorts of parts. The parts are different – on purpose. Some are needy parts. Some are strong parts. But every part belongs to the whole and those parts are fulfilled when they function as a part of the whole.

“In a Christian community everything depends upon whether each individual is an indispensable link in a chain. Only when even the smallest link is securely interlocked is the chain unbreakable. A community which allows unemployed [non-serving] members to exist within it will perish because of them. It will be well, therefore, if every member receives a definite task to perform for the community, that he may know in hours of doubt that he, too, is not useless and unusable. Every Christian community must realize that not only do the weak need the strong, but also that the strong cannot exist without the weak. The elimination of the weak is the death of fellowship.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer – Life Together

The body is the sum of the parts, but the parts don't exist for themselves, they exist for the whole, but in advancing the whole, the parts are thrilled because they know they were made for this.

There is an old fable that dates back to about 500 years BC, that a Roman leader told in order to avert an internal war. He said one day the various parts of the body for some reason became angry with the stomach and decided to starve it. So, they refused to feed it, and in so doing, they destroyed the stomach, and of course found out, too late, that they also destroyed themselves. You are not an island. You are part of something that is bigger than you and it demands you.

If you claim Christ, then you have to understand that there is no such thing as a committed follower of Christ who is not pursuing commitment and engagement within the body. So it is with Christ.

American, me-first Christianity has developed an individualistic, privatized religion that says, I want a relationship to Christ, but I don't want to be responsible for the church. I want the benefits of preaching and worship. I want the programs for my kids, the training for my students, the ordinances for my conscience. I want the gospel because I don't want to go to hell, but I just want to be left alone now. I do not want to be made to feel responsible for others. I have enough on my plate as it is. That may be popular, but it is not biblical. If you are a follower of Christ, you are already responsible for others, and the reason why some of you can't handle what is already on your plate is because you are trying to handle it all by yourself.

Why do we place such a high value upon membership, ministry, accountability, growth and body life? We have to. The Spirit of God who directed the writing of this text demands it, we have no other choice. I am like the parent who has a child who is cutting himself, or burning himself, or involved in some form of self-mutilation. I am frantic to help my kid. Therefore, I am driven to keep you from amputating yourself and thereby rendering the body disabled. At the same time, I am driven by a desire to stand before

Christ, one day in heaven, right next to you as part of a pure, and spotless and happy bride. The church is to be here as a true community, where people get connected to God and then to each other.

John Piper rightly observed, “We are very individualistic and resistant to others holding us to any standard that might cross our immediate desires. But God loves us and does not call us to what is bad for us. Church membership is a gift of grace. Like all relationships (marriage, parenting, employment, teams, citizenship), it has its pain. But, more than most of us realize, it has its life-sustaining, faith-strengthening, joy-preserving effect according to God’s plan and mercy.”<sup>1</sup>

The next verse builds on this.

## 2. **The Body is one.** – v.13 (the theology)

Do you remember the question I posed to you at the beginning of the sermon? We are saved from isolation from God and His people and we are saved to a relationship with God and His people. We are graciously saved from an eternal punishment which is the just penalty of our sin and we are saved to a community of believers with whom we will spend eternity. We, therefore go from isolation to communion, from separation to community. The Scriptures assume that one of the results of a genuine relationship with Christ will be experiencing and enjoying genuine fellowship with the people of Christ. This is clearly seen in the various ways in which the Scriptures describe our lives as Christians as being part of something that is bigger than any of us individually. We are sheep who are part of a flock. We are branches connected to a vine. We are stones that part of a temple. We are people who are part of the wedding party. We are members of a body. In fact, so many of the exhortations in the Scriptures, while they are intended to be taken to heart on an individual level are communicated in a plural form because as NT believers we are vital part of a community.

### a. **Because of the Spirit’s baptism.**

I will deal with this specific issue in more detail in the next message, but the Spirit’s baptism refers to the aspect of the Spirit’s ministry whereby at the moment you come to faith in Christ, you are placed into a new family – called the body of Christ – the church.

The Spirit’s baptism is an instantaneous result of coming to faith in Christ. What does it mean to come to faith in Christ? Coming to faith in Christ is an event that takes place in your life when you understand and personally embrace the gospel. The gospel is the good news that even though we are sinners who are deserving of God’s wrath, God provided the only way for our sins to be forgiven when He sent Christ to this earth. Christ came as God who took upon Himself humanity, and then as the God-man, he lived a perfectly righteous life because you could not live that way, and you understand that Christ then died on the cross in order to pay in full the just penalty of your sins because you could never stand in the presence of God being guilty of all of your sins and when

---

<sup>1</sup> John Piper, When I Don’t Desire God p. 131-132.

you understand that and repent of your sin and trust in Christ alone as your Savior, you are declared righteous in the eyes of God because as your sin is now placed onto Christ's account, His righteousness is now placed onto your account. If you have not done that, then you need to bow your heart before Christ right now and call out to Him to save you from your sin.

When you do that, one of the things that happens is that Christ sends the Spirit into your life who also places you into a new family called the church. This new family gives you a new identity that goes deeper than any racial or social label. That is clear from the text. There is no Jew, no Greek, no slave or free. We have a new identity that connects us with each other at the heart level, not the skin level, not the money or zip code level. This new family is made possible by the baptism of the Spirit and it is nourished and developed because of the Spirit's ongoing ministry.

**b. Because of the Spirit's connection.**

The Spirit who places us into the body of Christ is the Spirit who keeps us connected with each other. The Spirit is what we have in common. So, how do you view this church? How do you view your job? Are you there to see how much money you can get out of how little work you put in? Are you there to take advantage as much as you can of the management and owners? If you own the business, your view is radically different. This is yours. This business has your name on it and your reputation is staked to it.

Brothers and sisters, we are followers of Christ. We have his name. His name, and in that sense – our name is on this group.

But, if you view the family here as if you are only a consumer, then you will simply float in and out at will, without any genuine regard or relationship with the rest. Who cares if you are here once a month, or once a year? You will look at everything in terms of what's in it for me today. While there is some benefit to coming and hearing the Word and singing along, you miss all that is intended for you because true worship and the ministry of the Word is meant to be enjoyed in the context of genuine Christian relationships.

If you come as a member who takes responsibility for this ministry, then you will not wait for others to do a job that needs to be done – you will do it. You will not look to see how much you can get for as small of an investment as possible. You will not stay on the sidelines and simply find fault, you will jump in and help bring about solutions, because you understand that you really belong here.

Bumper Sticker – “Drive it like you stole it” Not very good advice. But for us, we could say, “Do church as if you own it.” In a very real way – you do.

The body is a unit...so it is with Christ.

Communion